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# CTX

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## From the Editor

What a difference a few months can bring—and how much stays the same. When I sat down in July to write the letter for the August issue (vol. 4, no. 3), Syria was still in crisis, Iraq was quickly sliding deeper into crisis, a radical Sunni militia calling itself ISIL/ISIS was starting to monopolize the terror headlines, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was boiling over into tragedy again. Since then, Al Shabaab lost its head, northern Iraq and southeastern Syria were carved into what its occupiers are now calling the Islamic State, and the United States and its allies have flown their advisors and bombers back into a wicked problem that will have global consequences for generations to come. No one seems able to agree on whether these changes are actually something new or just a rebranding of the same old jihad. Paradoxically, events may promise those tasked with combating terrorism far more job security than any of us really wishes for.

It's easy for the Western allies to obsess over terrorism in the Middle East, but other countries are dealing with internal and external terrorism in their own ways. I spent a few weeks in India over the summer, meeting with journalists, scholars, and military analysts to talk about their research and the subcontinent's terrorist movements. My goal was to invite contributions to *CTX*, and this issue brings you the first fruit of that mission. Dr. Sanchita Bhattacharya leads the issue off with an analysis of the political and legal climate in Pakistan that allows seemingly unlimited funding to flow to indigenous terrorist groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba. Not only do tough-sounding laws go unenforced, she observes, but the Pakistani regime itself appears complicit in enabling terrorism to flourish.

The next article, by Dr. Chris Harmon and Dr. Paula Holmes-Eber, focuses on women who have taken an active role in terrorism. We often forget that, from the radical leftist groups of the mid-twentieth century to anti-colonial insurgencies to present-day suicide bombers, some women have proven just as fervent as some men when it comes to their embrace of terrorism. We then turn from a topic that typically receives too little attention to one that might be receiving too much. Dr. Siamak Naficy describes the ways in which a current fascination with cultural sensitivity training in military and policy circles can actually obscure more than it illuminates. From his perspective as an anthropologist, he urges us to reexamine our own cherished assumptions if we hope to understand our opponents.

What does it say about a culture that creates annual holidays to honor its war dead and its military veterans, but then turns those holidays into just another excuse for brass band concerts and outdoor grilling? MAJ Anthony Heisler found himself asking this question when a well-meaning civilian wished him a "Happy Memorial Day!" His essay is his attempt to find an answer, and perhaps, bring change.

Last June, a group of 40 marksmen from seven countries gathered in Kazakhstan for the fifth annual “Golden Owl” international competition for sniper teams. MAJ Tlek Mirza and LT Ruslan Bek describe the competition, which took place over the course of several days in daunting weather conditions. The article is illustrated with a number of nice images of the event taken by photojournalist Samat Kazhymov.

For the CTAP interview, Amina Kator-Mubarez and I spoke with LTC Chok Dhakal of the Nepalese Army. LTC Dhakal spoke frankly about the difficulties the Royal Nepal Army (as it was then known) faced in confronting Maoist insurgents over the course of a bloody 12-year civil war. Although the years of fighting severely strained the country’s military, LTC Dhakal remains optimistic about the future of civil-military relations in republican Nepal.

Ethicist George Lober offers an unsettling rumination on the moral dilemmas military personnel in particular must confront “when dealing with the truly diabolical.” Where, he asks, would you draw the line between honoring the rule of law and engaging in extrajudicial killing when innocent lives are clearly at stake?

Next, Indian journalist Malladi Rama Rao reviews a book by terrorism experts Surinder Kumar Sharma and Anshuman Behera, *Militant Groups in South Asia* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2014). And last, but not least, in a think piece about the purposes of movies, LTC Samuel Bettwy wonders whether American filmmakers are wasting an opportunity to positively influence Muslim audiences by collaborating with their Middle Eastern counterparts—something European filmmakers have already begun to do.

Don’t forget to check out the latest monographs from the Joint Special Operations University in our Publications Announcements, and as always, I hope you will drop me a line and let me know what you think about CTX: CTXeditor@GlobalECCO.org. You can also like Global ECCO on Facebook to receive news updates on topics of interest to the CT community.

Finally, please take a moment to fill out the four brief questions in our customer survey, so we can get a sense of how to better serve our community—that’s you: <https://survey.nps.edu/576694/lang-en>

## ELIZABETH SKINNER

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**Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Samuel W. Bettwy** recently retired from the Judge Advocate General's Corps of the US Army Reserve after serving for 28 years, most recently as the deputy judge advocate for the 79th Sustainment Support Command in Los Alamitos, California. He has also served as an attorney for the US Department of Justice since 1986. LTC Bettwy currently teaches Comparative Criminal Procedure through Film at Thomas Jefferson School of Law in San Diego, California. His course textbook will be published in the next issue of *Opinio Juris in Comparatione*.

**Dr. Sanchita Bhattacharya** is presently a research associate with the Institute for Conflict Management in New Delhi, India. She successfully defended her PhD dissertation, *Madrassa Education in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh: A Comparative Study*, at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She writes frequently on the subject of political Islam, and her articles have been published by journals including the *East Asia Forum*, *Outlook India*, and *New Age Islam*.

**Lieutenant Colonel Chok Bahadur Dhakal** has served in the Nepalese Army since 1990. He was an independent company commander and battalion commander in insurgent-affected areas during the Maoist insurgency in Nepal (1996–2008). He has served on the Chief of the Army staff and as an instructor in the Army Academy and the Army Command and Staff College, among other posts, and on UN peacekeeping missions in Croatia, Lebanon, and the Ivory Coast. LTC Dhakal holds three MA degrees: in Strategic Studies (Nepal), Defense Studies (UK), and National Security Affairs (US).

**Dr. Christopher C. Harmon** currently serves on the faculty of the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu, Hawaii. He first published on terrorism in 1982 and has taught in related programs in a half-dozen civilian and military graduate schools. From 2010 to 2014, Dr. Harmon served as the Horner Chair of Military Theory at the US Marine Corps University. Dr. Harmon is the author or editor of five books, including two editions of *Terrorism Today* (Routledge, 2000, 2007) and *Toward a Grand Strategy against Terrorism* (McGraw-Hill, 2010). He serves on the editorial board of *Terrorism & Political Violence*.

**Major Anthony F. Heisler** is a US Army Special Forces officer who has served as a fire support officer and platoon leader with the 4th Infantry

Division in Iraq, and as the detachment commander of a Special Forces Operational Detachment-Alpha during two deployments to Afghanistan. He also has extensive operational experience working with NATO partners in Europe and in Afghanistan. MAJ Heisler holds degrees in history and in German language and literature from George Washington University and is currently pursuing an MS in Defense Analysis at the US Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), Monterey, California.

**Dr. Paula Holmes-Eber**, an anthropologist and specialist on Middle Eastern and North African cultures, has published extensively on the cultural aspects of war and conflict. Her books include *Culture in Conflict: Irregular Wars, Culture Policy, and the Marine Corps* (Stanford Security Studies, 2014), *Operational Culture for the Warfighter: Principles and Applications*, 2nd ed. (Marine Corps University Press, 2011), and *Daughters of Tunis: Women, Family, and Networks in a Muslim City* (Westview Press, 2002). Dr. Holmes-Eber earned her PhD in cultural anthropology from Northwestern University.

**George Lober** guides US and international military students through the tricky terrain of ethics and critical thinking at NPS. He earned his BA and MA in English from the California State University system, and has published in the journals *Eclectic Literary Forum* and *Red Wheelbarrow*. Mr. Lober became interested in the study of ethics in 1998 through a reacquaintance with both philosophy and critical thinking, and joined the faculty of NPS in 1999.

**Major Tlek Mirza** is the chief of staff in the Mass Media department of the MoD, Republic of Kazakhstan. Previously, he served as an officer in the Army Airborne Forces and took part in a 2006 peacekeeping mission in Iraq.

**Dr. Siamak Naficy** is a senior lecturer in Defense Analysis at NPS. He earned his PhD in anthropology from the University of California, Los Angeles. As an evolutionary scientist, his interests include cultural anthropology, evolutionary biology, and cognitive and social psychology. His research focuses on social intelligence and social preferences, including the ways in which socio-cultural and evolutionary processes shape human adaptive features, especially those that produce identity, within-group favoritism, and between-group conflict.

**Malladi Rama Rao** is a New Delhi-based analyst and writer on Indian politics and South Asian geopolitical and security issues. He edits the *South Asian Tribune*, is managing editor of the Policy Research Group (POREG), and co-directs Syndicate Features Service with his wife, Vaniram Rao. Mr. Rao began his journalism career reporting and editing for All India Radio (AIR), and won the Best Radio Correspondent of the Year award in 1994. He is presently translating *Lord Meher*, a 20-volume life story of Meher Baba, into Telugu, an Indian language.

### COVER PHOTO

Iraqi special operations forces snipers blend into their surroundings as they take aim during Exercise Lion's Leap in Baghdad, Iraq, April 26, 2011. (US Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Randy Redman/Released)

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## Pakistan: Money for Terror

THE WORLD BANK AND INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF) broadly defined the term *financing of terrorism* as “the financial support, in any form, of terrorism or of those who encourage, plan or engage in it.”<sup>1</sup> The need to track the sources of funding for terrorism was realized as far back as 1986, when the United Nations’ General Assembly drafted the first UN Convention against Recruitment, Use, Finance, and Training of Mercenaries. This convention was adopted on 4 December 1989. Furthermore, in 1994 the UN General Assembly called attention to the growing connection between drug traffickers and mercenaries. In light of these resolutions, the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1999.<sup>2</sup>

The state of Pakistan has, unfortunately, been at the vortex of various forms of terrorism and insurgent activities for several decades. The country is internally crippled by terrorism and the vast flows of funds to violent extremist groups that operate within its borders, even as the danger from this domestic infrastructure of terrorism percolates to other parts of the region and the world. Pakistan-based terrorist groups use a range of instrumentalities to raise finances, which include, among other things the manipulation of *hawala* (an informal system of money transfer), abuse of the charitable sector, narco-finance, and abduction for ransom. Raising money from criminal activities has long been a forte of militant organizations in Pakistan, and the Taliban are not loath to utilize these same methods. Ostensibly, such activities in a *dar-ul-harb*<sup>3</sup> (a war zone) are perceived to be legal under Qur’anic law.<sup>4</sup> Worse, Pakistan’s state institutions are deeply complicit in a wide range of terror finance operations, prominently including the printing and distribution of counterfeit Indian rupees, as well as long-term involvement in drug running to facilitate the operations of the Taliban in Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup> The attitude of Pakistan’s government toward terror groups could be described as dualistic. On the one hand, terrorists are criminalized by law; on the other hand, the Pakistani government provides them with both logistical and financial support.<sup>6</sup>

### A River Is Made of Many Small Streams

Terrorism is a syndicate-based activity, requiring huge amounts of financial support. The sustenance and training of cadres in various militant outfits and insurgent groups depend on a steady flow of funding. Moreover, in Pakistan, like in other developing countries, people often take up militant activities as a full-time profession, one that includes a salary structure.

The following section describes in more detail five of the primary means that terrorist groups have of generating funding: *hawala*, narcotics trafficking, abduction for ransom, charity, and resource exploitation.

*Dr. Sanchita Bhattacharya,  
Institute for Conflict Management*

Raising money from criminal activities has long been a forte of militant organizations in Pakistan.

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## Hawala

The word *hawala* comes from the Arabic root *h-w-l*, which has the basic meanings “to change” or “to transform,” and is defined as a bill of exchange or a promissory note.<sup>7</sup> Hawala is an efficient value transfer system that has endured across unstable regions and throughout many civilizations.<sup>8</sup> It is widely believed that the hawala system emerged during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to facilitate trade along the famous Silk Road.<sup>9</sup> Alongside its perfectly legitimate function as an efficient means of remittance, hawala facilitates money laundering in three stages: (1) discreetly introducing criminals’ funds into the financial system, (2) manipulating those funds so that they cannot easily be traced and thus appear legitimate, and (3) making the “clean” funds available for further use.<sup>10</sup>

People have used this traditional informal and often unregulated money transfer system not only in Pakistan, but throughout South Asia. A similar form of money transfer is also associated with ethnic groups from Africa and the rest of Asia.<sup>11</sup> According to the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan’s website, hawala is an alternative system that operates parallel to traditional banking channels.<sup>12</sup> It is distinguished from other remittance systems by the level of trust it entails, and its extensive use of connections such as family relationships or regional affiliations. Transfers of money take place based on communications between members of a network of *hawaladars*, who function as intermediaries.<sup>13</sup> Hawala works by transferring money without actually moving it, requires no bank accounts, and is consummated without leaving a paper trail.

Terrorist groups and criminal gangs have thoroughly infiltrated the hawala system in order to transfer funds for their activities, especially from the Middle East to Pakistan, and to other parts of the Indian subcontinent. Militant organizations in Pakistan have tended to depend heavily on the informal hawala system, thus bypassing governmental scrutiny or accountability.<sup>14</sup> One of the most well-established terror cohorts, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET) and its front group Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JUD), are infamous for siphoning terror money. The group collects “donations” from overseas Pakistani communities in the Persian Gulf and in countries such as the United Kingdom. Following a post-9/11 crackdown by President Pervez Musharraf to eliminate terror groups, a move the Indian press dismissed as mere “eyewash,” the LET-JUD black money continued to move via the hawala network of Pakistan. Unfortunately, the state’s actions in dealing with terror funding remained inadequate.<sup>15</sup>

Because the banking system is not widespread in Pakistan, hawala fills the gap for both licit and illicit transactions. There are only 26 million bank account holders in Pakistan out of a population of 170 million. Banks are not readily available, particularly in rural areas where most of the population resides, so this population uses hawala for its ease and ubiquity. Hawala is also used for the payment of smuggled goods and for merchants to pay below invoice for imported goods. These transactions evade custom duty, thus depriving the government of revenue from duties and taxes.<sup>16</sup>

Hawala networks typically do not maintain a large central business office for settling transactions. Instead, a loose association of hawaladars conducts business with each other, typically without any formal or legally binding agreements. Hawaladars often keep few formal records; those that do exist are usually handwritten in idiosyncratic shorthand and are typically destroyed once the

Banks are not readily available, particularly in rural areas where most of the population resides, so this population uses hawala for its ease and ubiquity.



transaction is completed. Hawala became particularly important for al Qaeda after the August 1998 East Africa bombings increased worldwide scrutiny of the formal financial system.<sup>17</sup> Reportedly, Osama bin Laden turned to an established hawala network operating in Pakistan and Dubai and throughout the Middle East to transfer funds efficiently.<sup>18</sup>

The Pakistan-Afghanistan border area, especially Pakistan's border provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), is ethnically contiguous and highly porous, which is to the advantage of the various militant groups that channel funds using hawala networks. The money market at Chowk Yadgar in Peshawar, the capital city of KP, is heavily populated by Afghan hawaladars. Furthermore, the autonomous nature of the region makes it even easier to transfer goods and money with impunity.<sup>19</sup>

In a March 2012 report citing Executive Order 13,224, the US Department of the Treasury designated two hawala companies working in the border region as Specially Designated Global Terrorists: Haji Khairullah Haji Satar Money Exchange (HKHS) and the Roshan Money Exchange (RMX).<sup>20</sup> Both HKHS and RMX have been used by the Taliban to facilitate money transfers. Abdul Satar Abdul Manan and Khairullah Barakzai Khudai Nazar co-own and jointly operate the HKHS throughout Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Dubai, and manage an HKHS branch in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region. In 2011, a senior Taliban member withdrew hundreds of thousands of dollars from an RMX branch in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region to distribute to Taliban shadow provincial governors.<sup>21</sup>

More recently, on 21 August 2014, the United States targeted the financial and leadership networks of the Taliban by officially designating one entity and two individuals as terrorists. The Pakistan-based hawala group Haji Basir and Zarjmil Company (aka Basir Zarjmil Hawala) and its owner Haji Abdul Basir were given this designation for providing financial services or other support to the Taliban in Afghanistan, according to the US Department of the Treasury. The Treasury Department also designated Taliban commander Qari Rahmat for acting for or on behalf of the Taliban, and claimed that the Quetta-based branch of Basir Zarjmil Hawala distributes money to Taliban members in Afghanistan as well.<sup>22</sup>

Following 9/11, then-Finance Minister of Pakistan Shaukat Aziz, a former executive vice president of Citibank in New York, said that \$2 billion to \$5 billion moved through the hawala system annually in Pakistan, more than the amount of foreign transfers through the country's banking system.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, a 2002 report on financial terrorism noted that government officials in Pakistan also estimated that \$7 billion entered the country each year through hawala; the actual volume is likely to be significantly higher.<sup>24</sup> In June 2004, the State Bank of Pakistan required all hawaladars to register as authorized foreign exchange dealers and to meet minimum capital requirements.<sup>25</sup> Despite the initiative, unlicensed hawaladars still operate illegally in parts of the country (particularly in Peshawar and Karachi), and authorities have taken little action to identify non-registered hawaladars or enforce the regulations prohibiting them. On 22 November 2012, the US Department of the Treasury designated a hawala firm, Rahat Ltd., along with its owner Mohammed Qasim and the manager of its branch in Quetta (the provincial capital of Balochistan), Musa Kalim, as financiers and money launderers for the Taliban. The firm has branches in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran, which "have been used by the Taliban to facilitate their illicit financial activities,"

Hawala became particularly important for al Qaeda after the August 1998 East Africa bombings increased worldwide scrutiny of the formal financial system.

A 2002 report on financial terrorism noted that government officials in Pakistan estimated that \$7 billion entered the country each year through hawala.

The “trust factor” that is such a vital aspect of the hawala system is well exploited by those hawala agents who deal in illicit money transfers.

Afghanistan produces 90 percent of the global supply of opium, from which heroin is processed, and roughly 40 percent of Afghan opium is smuggled through Pakistan.

the Treasury Department disclosed.<sup>26</sup> The press release also mentioned, “This includes facilitating millions of dollars of transactions to support the Taliban shadow governor for Helmand Province, UN Security Council 1988-Listed Naim Barich, who was also designated November 15, 2012, pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act for his extensive narcotics production and distribution activities.”<sup>27</sup>

The “trust factor” that is such a vital aspect of the hawala system is well exploited by those hawala agents who deal in illicit money transfers. The easy availability and accessibility of these dealers have made Pakistan’s hawala network stable and resilient. The situation is further complicated because common people without any links to terrorists also prefer hawala to banks; hawala is quick and avoids the difficult, tedious, and more expensive process of legal remittance.

### Narco-finance

Narco-finance has been another vital element of terrorist funding. Pakistan, along with Iran and Afghanistan, constitute the Golden Crescent, one of the world’s biggest drug-producing regions. Afghanistan produces 90 percent of the global supply of opium, from which heroin is processed, and roughly 40 percent of Afghan opium is smuggled through Pakistan.<sup>28</sup> Because the opium trade remains a major source of financing for the jihad led by the Taliban and al Qaeda in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, and also for the “holy” cause of defeating the Western “crusaders” and returning Afghanistan to an Islamic government, the struggle itself has been characterized as “narco-jihad.”<sup>29</sup>

The so-called “golden route” that runs from Afghanistan through Pakistan and into Iran, from where the Golden Crescent’s narcotics reach Western markets, has become established as one of the world’s most lucrative illicit drug thoroughfares.<sup>30</sup> According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) 2013 Report, global trafficking routes and seizure data in Pakistan indicate that the major trafficking routes run from Afghanistan through the western Pakistani provinces of KP and Balochistan into Iran in the west, and south to Pakistan’s coastal cities, including the ports of Karachi and Qasim in Sindh Province.<sup>31</sup> The Iranian route passes through Balochistan into the northwestern region of Iran, which is inhabited by Kurds (al Qaeda financier Yasin al-Suri is Kurdish), and finally into laboratories in Turkey, where the opium is processed into heroin.<sup>32</sup> Of the 11 Afghan provinces bordering Pakistan, only four (Khost, Paktika, Nuristan, and Paktiya) were either declared poppy-free or estimated to have cultivated less than 100 hectares of poppy in 2012. In November 2013, Rehman Malik, Pakistan’s former Interior Minister, also confirmed that Pakistan is a major transit route for Afghan opiates: according to him, nearly 160 metric tons of heroin, or 44 percent of total Afghan heroin production, transits through Pakistan’s territory. “It is estimated that in 2010, the total number of drug users in Pakistan reached about 8.1 million; they are abusing opium and heroin, including intravenously, and hashish, among other things,” Malik said on 12 November 2013.<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, according to the UNODC, Pakistan itself has over 1,000 hectares of poppy cultivation, concentrated in the restive FATA on the border with Afghanistan. Most Pakistani poppy cultivation apparently takes place in FATA, including its Khyber Agency, Dir, and Bannu, and in non-traditional areas including Orakzai, Kurram, and the North and South Waziristan Agencies, along with KP and Balochistan. Cannabis is also produced in large quantities in the border

provinces, although most of the cannabis trafficked in the region originates from Afghanistan and is then processed for distribution in the inaccessible areas of Pakistan's FATA region.<sup>34</sup>

It has been reported that the opium that goes through Pakistan is carried in from Afghanistan on trucks that are owned by the Pakistani Army's Fauji Foundation, which means the trucks are never checked at the border by customs officers.<sup>35</sup>

The narcotics trade through Pakistan has principally been used for funding terrorism. General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, who ruled Pakistan under a military junta from 1978 to 1988, encouraged the cultivation of poppy and cannabis during his regime to finance terrorist activities in India. General Zia's support for the cultivation of narcotic crops gave a new dimension to both international drug trafficking and terrorism in India, but in the process he failed to anticipate its repercussions on Pakistan. Heroin addiction spread like an epidemic during his martial administration, while drug traffickers operated freely and within a short span of time, had organized themselves into syndicates along the same lines as the Latin American drug cartels. Pakistani political figures such as Lieutenant General Fazle Haque, Haji Iqbal Beg, Sohail But, Shaukat Ali Bhatti, and Malik Waris Khan Afridi, among others, gained notoriety and political importance thanks to funds generated by narcotics trafficking.<sup>36</sup> Eventually, drug mafias established contacts within the government at both the political and administrative levels.<sup>37</sup>

The Regional Ministerial Conference on Counter-Narcotics, held in Islamabad in November 2012, noted that the government needed to do more to explore and address the link between illicit drug production, trafficking and terrorist financing. The Conference participants also agreed on the need to strengthen international cooperation concerning possible links between illicit drug trafficking, illicit production of narcotic drugs, and drug-related financing of terrorism.

In a way, Pakistan serves as the nerve center of the Afghan heroin networks, a key node in the trafficking of opiates from production to markets in Europe, Asia, and the Americas. For strategic reasons, Pakistan has long considered Afghanistan to be its "backyard," a regressive mindset that has caused harm to Pakistan itself as it becomes both the primary transit route and a destination for Afghan narcotics. Crafting a workable response to Afghan heroin requires significant counter-narcotics and governance capacity-building within Pakistan, as well as in Afghanistan.<sup>38</sup>

## Abduction for Ransom

*Abduction for ransom* is an important tactic used by various terrorist groups for the dual purposes of generating money and spreading terror. In the volatile atmosphere of contemporary Pakistan, abduction for ransom has achieved a significant level of notoriety and is affecting not only common people but also the country's elites. The actual abductions are often outsourced to criminal gangs that supply arms and money to terrorist groups in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Prominent terror groups like the Haqqani network, Quetta Shura Taliban, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Tawheedul Islam (a pro-government militia), and Baloch insurgents and other armed gangs are very much involved in abduction and ransom to fund their activities.

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Pakistani police estimate that kidnaping is now the single largest source of revenue for the Taliban factions located in Pakistan.

Between 2000 and 2010, official data showed a 153 percent increase in kidnaping/abduction. Police in Balochistan reported that kidnaping for ransom (many incidents of which are never reported to the police) was a growing problem in the province. The cause is a complex mix of profit-seeking, rivalry between groups engaged in smuggling, and fundraising for terrorist activities. Reports indicate that all of Pakistan's provinces are now under attack from armed abductors, with women and children being the easiest targets, along with foreigners and members of the Shi'a minority. Data collated from Criminal Statistics of Sindh Province suggest that, between 2003 and 2012, a total of 12,311 cases of "kidnapping for abduction" and 933 cases of "kidnapping for ransom" were recorded in the province.<sup>39</sup> The lack of official sincerity about dealing with the problem is evident in the fact that, apart from Sindh, no chronological data regarding abduction in other Pakistani provinces are available on the official websites of the respective provincial police.<sup>40</sup>

Pakistani police estimate that kidnaping is now the single largest source of revenue for the Taliban factions located in Pakistan. The Taliban's main targets are wealthy businessmen, aid workers, and journalists.<sup>41</sup> A report from the Canadian-based insurance brokerage Burns and Wilcox titled *Kidnap and Ransom: Global Overview* suggests that the risk is high for businessmen, corporate executives, wealthy people (and their families), foreigners, aid workers (especially in health services), and diplomats. Moreover, cases of extortion have spread, mainly in Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, and other major cities of Punjab and Sindh Provinces, but also in high-risk areas with militant activity such as Peshawar in KP, Quetta in Balochistan, and the FATA.<sup>42</sup>

Apart from the above-mentioned high-risk groups, certain religious minorities—especially Shi'as and Ahmadis—also face the brunt of abduction. In one such incident, in November 2013, TTP's local militants in Faisalabad had allegedly been assigned the task of kidnaping members of the Shi'a and Ahmadi communities to ransom for fundraising. The five alleged TTP terrorists—Usman Ghani *alias* Talha of Jameel Town, Ghulam Mohammadabad, Ali Azam *alias* Farooq of Razabad, Mubashar Nadeem *alias* Bao of Chak Jhumra, Usman of Lahore, and Shahzad Ali of Gurunanakpura—were captured by police and presented to the media at a press conference on 5 November 2013. Media sources said the plan to kidnap members of the two communities was approved after an "edict" in favor of such kidnappings for ransom was issued by an unidentified cleric. According to the sources, the militants told their investigators that they would raise funds for terrorist activities by looting the houses of Shi'a community members and stealing phone company cables. They also confessed that they would send a part of their ill-gotten money to their group leader, Qari Imran, in Miranshah, North Waziristan.<sup>43</sup>

Kidnaping is a centuries-old scourge in parts of Pakistan, from the tribesmen who snatched British colonists in the nineteenth century to the slum gangs that have preyed on Karachi business families since the 1980s. Moreover, the Pakistani Taliban are unapologetic. "We are targeting foreigners in reaction to government demands that we expel the foreign mujahedeen," said the deputy leader of the Pakistani Taliban, Waliur-Rehman, during an interview at his North Waziristan stronghold. Ransom demands typically range between \$500,000 and \$2.2 million, although the final price is often one-tenth of the initial asking amount. The kidnapers' methods are sophisticated: surveillance of targets that can last for months; sedative injections to subdue victims after abduction; video

"We are targeting foreigners in reaction to government demands that we expel the foreign mujahedeen," said the deputy leader of the Pakistani Taliban.



demands via Skype; and the use of different gangs, who often operate with little knowledge of one another, for different tasks.<sup>44</sup>

In a country where the government itself has not been successful in dealing with terrorist organizations and their illegal activities, abduction seems to be the easiest way to generate “fast money.” In the atypical domestic atmosphere of Pakistan, militants enjoy legal impunity to a large extent. Moreover, abduction threats or actual abduction do not leave much scope for the victims but to pay the ransom amount, out of either fear or compulsion.

### Zakat, Ushr, Fitrana, and Charitable Organizations

Islam as a religion emphasizes charity, community, and a humane element through various activities. The egalitarian outlook of the religion also encourages prosperous members of society to donate a portion of their riches for the benefit of the deprived. Unfortunately, like other tenets of Islam, however, the virtue of charity has been widely exploited, and the common people of Pakistan are often misled into donating to militant organizations like LET and JuD that hide behind religious piety. Terrorist groups in Pakistan even use *Eid* (religious festivals) to connect with people and take advantage of their religious sentiment. Government authorities make little or no effort to stop such transactions, despite the fact that donations to terrorists are officially banned.<sup>45</sup>

Terrorist groups in Pakistan even use Eid (religious festivals) to connect with people and take advantage of their religious sentiment.

Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, led by Maulana Fazlur Rehman Khalil, and Jammat-ul-Furqan, led by Maulana Abdullah Shah Mazhar, two banned militant outfits linked to the TTP and al Qaeda, have set themselves up as charities under the new names Ansar-ul-Umma and Tehreek-e-Ghalba Islam, as an easy way to get more funds.<sup>46</sup> These organizations take advantage of the generosity of Pakistani Muslims, who annually contribute billions of rupees as part of *zakat* (an Islamic tithe) and *fitrana/fitra*, a gift of food or money paid on Eid-al-Fitr, the festival that marks the end of Ramadan.<sup>47</sup> The funds are utilized for *dawa* (preaching), *khidmat-e-khalq* (provision of social services), and jihad, including recruitment and training, and the procurement of equipment and weapons.

Like al Qaeda and the Taliban, JuD has used social media to collect funds.<sup>48</sup> In June 2012, for instance, JuD sent messages on Twitter and Facebook asking Muslims across the world to donate zakat and fitra during Ramadan. JuD also harvests significant revenues from gathering and selling the hides of animals slaughtered during the holy festival of Eid al-Adha. In November 2010, Yahya Mujahid, the spokesperson for JuD, conceded that, under the banner of the LET-affiliated NGO Falah-i-Insaniat Foundation (FIF), JuD had set up seven camps for collecting the hides of sacrificial animals in Islamabad and ten such camps in the adjacent city of Rawalpindi (both in Punjab Province).

The problem with Pakistan's counterterrorism practices lies in the fact that Pakistan's government can appear duplicitous when it comes to controlling terrorists. The Pakistan Muslim League–led Punjab state government continues to provide financial support to JuD for “welfare” activities; the state budget for the fiscal year (FY) 2013–14 included a grant-in-aid of 61.35 million Pakistani rupees (PKR) (a little over \$600,000) for the administration of the group's training camp, Markaz-e-Taiba. The budget also included an allocation of PKR 350 million for a students' knowledge park at Muridkey and various other development initiatives across Punjab.<sup>49</sup> Earlier, in FY 2009–10, the Pakistani federal government

The problem with Pakistan's counterterrorism practices lies in the fact that Pakistan's government can appear duplicitous when it comes to controlling terrorists.

provided more than PKR 80.2 million for the administration of JuD facilities. In FY 2010–11, two separate grants of PKR 79.8 million were given to six organizations at Markaz-e-Taiba, and a special grant-in-aid of PKR 3 million was awarded to JuD's Al-Dawa School system in seven districts of Punjab. In addition to these funding streams, JuD's "Farmers and Labor" wing is responsible for the collection of *ushr* (an Islamic land tax).<sup>50</sup>

While the state collects zakat under the 1980 Zakat and Ushr Ordinance, and other benign charities are working in the field, there is strong evidence to suggest that proscribed militant outfits set up religious charities and manipulate information about their true identity to collect zakat throughout Pakistan. The realization that there is a potential for terror financing via zakat is the main reason that, in 2012, the Interior Ministry of Pakistan began requiring social welfare organizations collecting zakat to formally apply for state permission before beginning any fund-raising activity.<sup>51</sup>

Moreover, militants do not seem loath to exploit natural calamities to generate funds for themselves. Militant-linked charities often enjoy a spike in donations after natural disasters. Following the 2005 earthquake in Kashmir and KP, the Taliban-linked Al-Rasheed Trust (ART) reportedly raised \$10.1 million in five months, while Al-Rehmat Trust, a charity associated with Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM), raised \$6.4 million according to a 2009 report on funding of Pakistani militant organizations published by the Islamabad-based Pak Institute for Peace Studies.<sup>52</sup>

Fundraising in the garb of charitable trusts is another principal source of money for terror outfits. For instance, one notorious trust, Al Akhtar, an offshoot of the terrorist group JEM, has been designated by the US Treasury Department as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) since 2003 and by the UN since 2005. Moreover, Al Akhtar Trust has been operating under a multiplicity of other identities, including the Pakistan Relief Foundation, Pakistani Relief Foundation, Azmat-e-Pakistan Trust, and Azmat Pakistan Trust. Saud Memon, a financier of Al Akhtar Trust, was found to be involved in the kidnapping and murder of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl.<sup>53</sup> Al Rasheed Trust (ART) also deserves mention in this context; it was listed by the US Treasury Department as an FTO on 23 September 2001 and by the UN on 6 October 2001. ART was known to be supporting jihadi activities in Chechnya, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir under the leadership of Mufti Mohammad Rashid. It also worked under the identities of Al Amin Welfare Trust, Al Amin Trust, Al Ameen Trust, and Al Madina Trust. ART was further linked to LET, JEM, al Qaeda, and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, among others. Later, by the end of 2001, it had merged with Al Akhtar Trust.<sup>54</sup>

The Saudi angle to such underhanded activities is manifest in the example of Al-Haramain Foundation (Pakistan), a branch of the Saudi Arabia-based Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation founded by Aqeel Abdulaziz Aqeel al-Aqeel. This "charitable organization," which is also associated with Maktab al-Khidamat, an organization financed by Osama bin Laden, was listed by the UN on 26 January 2004 "as being associated with Al-Qaida or the Taliban for 'participating in financing, planning, facilitating, preparing or perpetrating of acts or activities by, in conjunction with, under the name of, on behalf or in support of' Al-Qaida."<sup>55</sup>

Militant-linked charities often enjoy a spike in donations after natural disasters.

Saud Memon, a financier of Al Akhtar Trust, was found to be involved in the kidnapping and murder of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl.

## Other Fundraising Channels

The Taliban are also generating money from the timber trade and gem mining in the Swat area. Large-scale illegal cutting of the region's pine forests began simultaneously with the 2007 Taliban offensive in the area. In addition, Taliban militants have been involved in the widespread logging of the thick pine forests and apple orchards of Malam Jabba, Fatehpur, Miandam, and Lalko, often in collusion with criminal syndicates. Emerald mining and the international sale of gemstones such as pink topaz, peridot, aquamarine, and tourmaline through various channels provide much-needed capital for the Taliban to capture other natural resources in the region. There are also reports that archaeological sites in the area are being looted, with the Taliban likely taking a cut of the proceeds.<sup>56</sup>

Emerald mining and the international sale of gemstones provide much-needed capital for the Taliban.

The Pakistani intelligence agency, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), runs an Indian currency counterfeiting network that is another source of finance for Pakistan's terrorist networks, and unconfirmed reports suggest ISI operatives are involved in heroin smuggling from Afghanistan through Pakistani seaports.<sup>57</sup> The ISI Directorate, which was formed at independence in 1947, received backing from the US Central Intelligence Agency during its anti-Soviet campaigns in Afghanistan following the 1979 invasion. As a result, the ISI came to control enormous—often unaccounted—financial resources, which it used to execute

a range of sustained covert operations, including the creation and support of terrorist groups, across the South Asian neighborhood. Media reports indicate that ISI consists of four “wings”: A-Wing directs analysis and is the bureaucratic department; T-Wing is the technical section and provides assistance to the other wings; C-Wing conducts counterintelligence; and S-Wing reportedly oversees “external security” and is responsible for the state's sponsorship of various terrorist formations, including al Qaeda, the Taliban, and a number of jihadi groups that specifically target India.<sup>58</sup>



How to spot a fake currency note

## Legal Measures to Control Terror Financing

Within a short span of three weeks prior to winding up their term in March 2013, both the Senate (upper house) and National Assembly (lower house) of Pakistan's parliament passed Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Bill 2013, which deals in particular with offenses related to the financing of terrorism. The bill, which the National Assembly passed unanimously on 20 February and a majority in the Senate passed on 5 March, empowers government authorities to take action against elements involved in financing terrorism in the country, and provides for, among other things, the confiscation of properties owned by those involved in such activities. This latest bill is an update of the earlier



Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Bill 2010 introduced in the Senate, which proposed amendments to the existing Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) 1997. The 2010 bill, however, stayed in the Senate Standing Committee on the Interior, and was reportedly withdrawn in 2012 for reasons that remain unknown.

Pakistan's covert policy of sponsoring terrorist formations as instruments of state policy can never be reconciled with any legislation that seeks to curb terrorism.

Clearly, there is an urgent need for a strong law to check terror-finance in Pakistan. ATA 1997 had been engineered against the backdrop of the political situation of the 1990s. After 9/11, however, the situation changed dramatically for the worse. Accordingly, there is a much more urgent need to provide augmented powers to the police and other investigating agencies for the monitoring and surveillance of persons, financial transactions, and money flows in connection with terrorism. The objective of the 2013 bill is to “strengthen the provision concerning the offences of terrorism financing and to provide more effective enforcement measures against such offences.”<sup>59</sup> It also expands the scope of the definition of *money* in the context of terrorist finance to include “coins or notes in any currency, postal orders, money orders, bank credits, bank accounts, letter of credit, travellers cheques, bank cheques, bankers’ draft in any form, electronic, digital or otherwise and such other kinds of monetary instruments or documents as the Federal Government may by order specify.” The definition of *property* includes “corporeal or incorporeal, moveable or immovable, tangible or intangible and includes shares, securities, bonds and deeds or interest in property of any kind or money.” These are all worthwhile measures. In light of the strong anecdotal evidence concerning Pakistan’s many financial channels to support terrorism, an empirical investigation has potentially significant and widespread policy implications.<sup>60</sup> But so far the bill stays on paper—due to strong opposition, it had not been signed as of this writing and thus isn’t being enforced.

Habib Bank Plaza



The Pakistani state’s enduring legacy of harboring and supporting terrorism, however, casts doubt on the efficacy of Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Bill 2013, even if or when it receives presidential approval. Pakistan’s covert policy of sponsoring terrorist formations as instruments of state policy can never be reconciled with any legislation that seeks to curb terrorism. The 2013 bill is, at best, a face-saving device to counter mounting pressure from the international community. Pakistan’s geostrategic ambitions will play a decisive role in undermining the efficacy of the provisions of the bill with respect to the control of terrorism financing.

### External Pressure on Pakistan

The possibility of UN sanctions on Pakistan for failing to comply with the standards of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is likely to have fueled the development of Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Bill 2013.<sup>61</sup> The first concrete step on terrorist financing taken by the UN, in October 1999, was the adoption of UNSCR 1267.<sup>62</sup> In this resolution, the UN Security Council called on Afghanistan’s Taliban regime to turn over Osama bin Laden without further delay because of his indictment in the United States for the bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. It also called on all member states to freeze the funds and other financial resources of the Taliban and al Qaeda, and any associated entities and individuals.<sup>63</sup>



It is apparent that the world's awareness regarding terror finance was amplified as one result of 9/11. At that time, the US government undertook tactical actions to disrupt individual nodes in the terrorist financial network and strategic initiatives to change the environment within which terrorists raise and move their funds.<sup>64</sup> Pakistan was first publicly identified by the FATF in February 2008 for deficiencies in its anti-money laundering/counterterrorist financing (AML/CTF) regime.<sup>65</sup> In October 2011, the FATF pressed Islamabad to amend ATA 1997 to include the freezing of assets and other stern action on charges of terrorist financing by 12 February 2012. When it missed the deadline, Pakistan was immediately blacklisted by the FATF. Later, in June 2012, the FATF reiterated that laws on terrorism financing and anti-money laundering in Pakistan either did not exist or were ineffective. Furthermore, in October 2012, the FATF included Pakistan in its official Public Statement, underlining continuing deficiencies in Pakistan's AML/CTF regime.<sup>66</sup>

In June 2012, the Financial Action Task Force reiterated that laws on terrorism financing and anti-money laundering in Pakistan either did not exist or were ineffective.

## What Islamabad Has Accomplished

Media reports in October 2012 suggested that a few token steps were taken by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to check possible financing of terrorist activities, and that it had frozen 128 bank accounts and seized over PKR 750 million. Earlier, in 2010, the SBP had developed the Anti-Money Laundering Act,<sup>67</sup> which also established a Financial Monitoring Unit to monitor suspicious financial transactions.<sup>68</sup> In keeping with the trend of recent years, on 22 July 2012, authorities imposed a nationwide ban on zakat and fitrana collections by banned organizations during Ramadan. "Any social and welfare organisation willing to collect zakat and fitrana has to apply and acquire permission from the government; otherwise, no one will be allowed to indulge in these activities," Rehman Malik, senior advisor to Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf for internal affairs, said on the day the ban was announced.<sup>69</sup>

To provide an ownership structure in Pakistan for remittance facilitation, SBP, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis launched a joint initiative called the Pakistan Remittance Initiative (PRI) in April 2009. The goal of this initiative was to both facilitate and support the efficient flow of remittances and help to provide investment opportunities in Pakistan for overseas Pakistanis.<sup>70</sup> So far, unfortunately, the initiative has not been very effective at undercutting informal financial networks. Earlier, according to the *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, Vol. 2, SBP and Pakistan's customs agency had set up jointly staffed counters at international airports to monitor the transportation of foreign currency.<sup>71</sup> In furtherance of the "official commitment" of 2007, Pakistani authorities made a number of significant cash seizures at the international airports in Karachi (the provincial capital of Sindh), Lahore (the provincial capital of Punjab), and Peshawar (the provincial capital of KP), as well as at various land border crossings.

## Conclusion

The latest UN Human Development Index puts Pakistan in the Low Human Development range, with a ranking of 146 out of 187 countries.<sup>72</sup> This should come as no surprise given the situation in Pakistan, where the majority of resources and finances go to either the accounts of the country's elites or the coffers of terror groups. As a result, the rest of the country languishes in a vicious cycle of never-ending poverty and deprivation, while the vast resources at the disposal of

The country is suffering from a man-made epidemic of violence and hatred, fueled by the various channels of illegal finance.

insurgents and militants are used against the people themselves. In the end, the country is suffering from a man-made epidemic of violence and hatred, fueled by the various channels of illegal finance.

What is more, Pakistan's inability to control terrorist activities within its borders damages its international reputation. The world's leading financial standards body, the FATF, declared in June 2013 that Pakistan and 11 other countries have failed to make sufficient progress in preventing money laundering and terrorist financing.<sup>73</sup> This complex web of illegal financial transactions needs to be taken seriously. Pakistan must restrict and disown regional terror activities—the country itself is internally crippled, and its people are among the worst victims of terrorist violence. It may be that, in terms of regulating terror, Pakistan has reached a point of no return where violent extremists can simply shout out the few remaining voices of reason. ❖

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- 45 "Beginning in the late 1970s, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries settled a banking system aimed at promoting and propagation (Dawa) of Islam around the world. In 1974 the OIC summit in Lahore voted to create the inter-governmental Islamic Development Bank (IDB). Based in Jeddah, it became the cornerstone of a new banking system inspired by religious principles. In 1975 the Dubai Islamic Bank—the first modern, non-governmental Islamic bank—was opened. In 1979 Pakistan became the first country to embark on a full Islamization of its banking sector." Jean-Charles Brisard, *Terrorism Financing: Roots and Trends of Saudi Terrorism Financing* (Paris: JCB Consulting, 2002): <http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/testimony/22.pdf>

- 46 “Unlike other terrorist leaders, Osama bin Laden is not a military hero, a religious authority, or an obvious representative of the downtrodden and disillusioned. He is a rich financier. He built al Qaeda’s financial network from the foundation of a system originally designed to channel resources to the mujahideen fighting the Soviets. When it was headquartered in Sudan and then Afghanistan, the al-Qaeda terrorist organization provided important financial support to its host state—instead of the other way around.” *Terrorist Financing* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 2002): <http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-financing/terrorist-financing/p5080>
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- 51 Shah Aman Rana, *The Economic Causes of Terror: Evidence from Rainfall Variation and Terrorist Attacks in Pakistan*, 10 September 2013: [http://www.iza.org/conference\\_files/YSP2013/aman\\_rana\\_s9081.pdf](http://www.iza.org/conference_files/YSP2013/aman_rana_s9081.pdf). It is too early to say whether the new regulation is having an effect or remains “on paper” only; these organizations continued to collect taxes as recently as 2013.
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- 53 Daniel Pearl was kidnapped by an al Qaeda cell in early 2002 while he was living in Pakistan. A videotape of him being beheaded by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed a few weeks later was publicized by the cell. See “Reporter Daniel Pearl is Dead, Killed by His Captors in Pakistan,” *Wall Street Journal*, 24 February 2002: <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB1014311357552611480>
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- 62 “United Nations Security Council, Security Council Committee Pursuant to Resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) Concerning Al-Qaida and Associated Individuals and Entities,” UN, n.d.: <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/>
- 63 Dalyan, “Combating the Financing of Terrorism.”
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- 65 Bhattacharya, “Pakistan: Terror-Finance Inc.”
- 66 “FATF Public Statement–19 October 2012,” Financial Action Task Force (FATF), n.d.: <http://www.fatf-gafi.org/countries/n-r/pakistan/documents/fatfpublicstatement-19october2012.html>
- 67 “Anti-Money Laundering Act,” Boston University Center for Finance, Law, & Policy, n.d.: <http://www.bu.edu/bucflp/laws/anti-money-laundering-act/>. Among other provisions, the Act (1) establishes a National Executive Committee to make high-level decisions on anti-money laundering/counterterrorist financing (AML/CTF) matters; (2) establishes a Financial Monitoring Unit to receive and analyze reports of suspicious transactions, assist in investigations, recommend changes to regulations, and generally exercise responsibility for AML/CTF; and (3) provides directions on the investigation, search, and seizure of property.
- 68 *FATF Report: The Role of Hawala and Other Similar Service Providers in Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing* (Paris: FATF, 2013): <http://www.fatf-gafi.org/media/fatf/documents/reports/Role-of-hawala-and-similar-in-ml-tf.pdf>
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## Women in Terrorist Undergrounds

**E**VEN IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY, MANY OF US RETAIN THE SENSE that women are the gentler sex, the nurturers, and the protectors.<sup>1</sup> But modern militancy is dangerously misunderstood unless the counterterrorism and intelligence communities confront the fact that females have been and are fighting in the ranks, and are even taking a leadership role in some groups. Today's insurgencies and small terrorist groups include numerous women; they may command, execute, plan, handle logistics, write or translate publications, prepare false travel documents, manage safe houses, reconnoiter in advance of attacks, or do the shooting or bomb placement. Women are full participants in contemporary terrorism, yet this is not adequately recognized in the analytic community, in part because al Qaeda Central has been an all-male cohort. But this general misapprehension must not persist. What we don't know can kill us.

Does anyone remember Kim Hyun Hee? She is a former child model who appeared in North Korean propaganda films and a terrorist who later declared that she was acting under orders from Kim Jong-Il, the son of North Korea's long-time dictator, when she helped place a bomb on a South Korean airliner in 1987. All 115 people aboard died in this act, which was aimed to discourage attendance at Seoul's 1988 Summer Olympics. Kim's role in this drama was to play "granddaughter" to a much older man, a professional North Korean spy. Their pairing removed suspicion. So, perhaps, did the beauty of this former actress, since many people believe that a beautiful woman is unlikely to be violent, let alone a terrorist. Unlike the older agent, Kim could not swallow her cyanide tablet as captors closed in. She lived, found herself showered with marriage proposals, wrote an autobiography, and still lives in celebrity in South Korea.<sup>2</sup> "The only thing I can say is that I am sorry," she confesses in frequent media appearances.

North Korea had selected a female agent who could deploy beauty and acting ability to "disarm" security personnel. Modern insurgent and terrorist undergrounds well understand the potential of female operatives and fighters to effectively carry out their cause. In some environments—such as Latin America insurgencies or the Nepalese Maoist uprising of the late 1990s—girls and women have become common in varied fighting roles. And they are effective. Several female members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) helped sink over half a dozen Sri Lankan naval vessels in LTTE's long separatist campaign. "We find that they are more fierce than the men," reflected a two-star general of Sri Lanka's army as he looked back on personal experiences against women in the LTTE ground combat forces.<sup>3</sup>

In this article, we explore cases from across the globe that illustrate the many roles that women have played within terrorist groups, as well as their motivations for participation. Our goal is not to review, or debate with, the contemporary academic literature on female terrorism, but to expand general understanding of the phenomenon by examining cases of terrorists often forgotten by this

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same contemporary literature. Our cases are drawn from a worldwide survey of newspaper reports, court documents, memoirs by terrorists, public interviews, and biographical accounts of female terrorists since 1900. Playing on social stereotypes of women as passive, nurturing, and nonviolent, the women in these organizations often use their traditional roles to avoid detection. Terrorist crime annals have logged the pregnant suicide bomber, the motherly safe house manager, the secretive cyber-propagandist whose postings emerge from the anonymity of the World Wide Web, the skillful but silent translator of explosive “jihadist” screeds, and the “helpless” widow who runs money as an international terrorist financier.

The motives of such women are also in contrast to popular beliefs. Many voluntarily join terrorist groups. Very often, their motivations are similar to those of the men: politics, psychology, power, religion, glamour, adventure. Terrorism also appears to offer women opportunities to break out of the limitations of their gender roles in society. Familial and romantic ties may also play roles, as illustrated in certain cases examined in the following sections.

## Leaders

Lolita Lebrón was a flamboyant woman whose action helped set the tone for a violent Puerto Rican separatist campaign in the United States. In 1950, President Truman’s temporary residence in Washington, DC, was attacked by two male gunmen from Puerto Rico.<sup>4</sup> On 1 March 1954, Lebrón assembled her team of four, took a train south from New York City to Washington, DC, and entered the Capitol and the visitor’s gallery overlooking the floor of the House of Representatives. Suddenly, the activists unfurled a banner calling for independence of the Commonwealth from the United States, shouted “Puerto Rico libre!” and began sustained firing with pistols they had smuggled past guards. By the time the foursome were wrestled to the floor, five congressmen were wounded (one nearly died).

Lebrón’s dramatic image probably redoubled whatever publicity the Puerto Rican separatist movement might have garnered from the attack. *The Washington Post*, still fascinated by her a half-century later, ran a magazine cover story on her life titled “When Terror Wore Lipstick.”<sup>5</sup> Prison did not dim Lebrón’s aspirations for the independence movement. She never apologized for attempted murder but instead “celebrated” each anniversary of the armed action until her death on 1 August 2010. Some saw her as a hero of political nationalism. Her fan club must have included later generations of Puerto Rican terrorists, such as the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional and Los Macheteros, organizations that deployed many women in varied roles, including as shooters and bomb carriers.

Bernardine Dohrn set a similar tone on US campuses in 1969 and 1970. The organization Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was losing influence to extremists ready to use terror, especially the SDS faction called the Weathermen, to which Dohrn belonged. Robberies and the bombing of prominent buildings were hallmarks of this group of several hundred members, about half of whom were women. In 1970 the group, forced into hiding, renamed itself the Weather Underground. Dohrn’s flaming rhetoric and flaunted sensuality made her a spectacle on a stage with a microphone; her political intelligence and cool head made her an adept leader. She shared leadership duties with another prominent Weatherman, Billy Ayers, whom she would later marry. Many other women in



Lebrón being led by police officers following her arrest



Bernardine Dohrn

the Weather Underground fought in the open or worked at length below the surface. Second-tier leader Diana Oughton died in a basement along with two others when her group made a misstep while building dynamite bombs.<sup>6</sup>

Gudrun Ensslin was one of the troika leading the Red Army Faction (RAF) in Germany at about the same time that the Weather Underground was operating. She was also the intimate partner of co-leader Andreas Baader; to his recklessness and love of action, she added calculation and ideological seriousness. Both were aggressive and domineering types. They mistreated the third, more introverted leader, a woman named Ulrike Meinhof, who was a well-known journalist before turning terrorist. Meinhof was the last to join the threesome and the first to commit suicide in jail; Ensslin and Baader later followed her example. While alive, Meinhof added incomparably to the leaders' joint labors at public image-making, an activity that lies at the very heart of terrorism. Her impressive work gave the "Baader-Meinhof Gang" its informal label. Since he had so few ideas of value, Baader is today of little interest to scholars, while Meinhof is the subject of new studies.<sup>7</sup>

Another female terrorist leader was Fusako Shigenobu, who emerged in the top spot of the Japanese Red Army (JRA) and served there from the 1970s until 2000. The JRA included a number of women who participated in its activities alongside the men.<sup>8</sup> The group's ideology was Marxist-Leninist, and its members' passion for "communist internationalism" prompted the group to liaise with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The JRA's attacks included the May 1972 massacre of travelers at Lod Airport, Israel, where, ironically, the dead included many Puerto Rican Christians deplaning for tourism and worship in the Holy Land. Shigenobu worked from Beirut at times, and her cadre often enjoyed safe haven in North Korea. Shigenobu's long run from the law ended with her arrest in Osaka, and she has spent the last decade and a half in Japanese custody.<sup>9</sup>

No current international terrorist group is known to be directed by a woman, but at least two women have served as effective leaders in recent years. The Uganda-based Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is not fully the creation of the infamous Joseph Kony; it grew from an armed spiritual movement founded in the 1980s by Alice Lakwena, thought to be Kony's aunt.<sup>10</sup> She developed the perverse ideas of the organization by twisting together the biblical Ten Commandments with certain indigenous spiritual concepts and personal embellishments. The result was a cult that grew by way of guerrilla war, mass theft, terror attacks on villages, and the kidnaping and forcible enlistment of child soldiers. A number of women have held positions of authority in the LRA, although because these terrorists are being hunted by a multinational force of soldiers, the group's current disposition is unclear.

The fascinating second case of a woman in a leadership role is Maryam Rajavi, a metallurgical engineer-turned-terror boss. In the early 1970s, Rajavi joined the People's Mujahedin-e Khalq, or MEK, a largely secular group of Iranian dissidents led by her husband Massoud Rajavi. Maryam was Massoud's second wife. They developed capacities at guerrilla war and terrorism originally in support



Gudrun Ensslin in the film *Das Abonnement*



Ulrike Meinhof





Maryam Rajavi, 2006

of, and then in opposition to, the regime of Ayatollah Ruholla Khomeini; the Iraqi state later donated tanks and other conventional arms to the group. When Massoud disappeared after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, Maryam carried on their enterprise. Presumably directed from the dual headquarters in the Seine valley of France and Camp Ashraf in Iraq, this disciplined and mysterious group continued its violent attacks, aimed especially at Iran's civilian and military leaders and the Iranian public.<sup>11</sup> In 2004, after the MEK faction in Iraq disarmed and was confined to Camp Ashraf, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld designated the group "protected persons," a status they kept until Iraq regained sovereignty in 2009.<sup>12</sup> Maryam grew into an adept politician, cultivating European parliamentarians, noted barristers, and the global media. When her travel was blocked by anti-terror sanctions, she made political broadcasts by satellite. In recent years, oversized ads seeking the removal of MEK from the US Department of State's foreign terrorist group list appeared in various US media. Several public figures, including some who had held important counterterrorism roles, signed these ads in support. The publicity campaign succeeded: in late September 2012, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton removed Maryam Rajavi and her "People's Mujahedin" from the US terrorism list.

## Lethal Actors

There are a number of instances of women acting both alongside men and in specialized roles in insurgencies and terrorist organizations throughout the twentieth century. This section details a few of the noteworthy occurrences.

### The Battle of Algiers (1956–1957)

A French intelligence officer who took a direct and reprehensible role in the Battle of Algiers published his memoir and some remarkable photos before he died in 2013.<sup>13</sup> One picture in this collection shows four Algerian girls—Zohra Drif, Hassiba Ben Bouali, Djamila Bouhired, and Samia Lakhdari—who had been recruited by Fronte de Libération Nationale (FLN) terrorist Yacef Saadi to plant bombs in public places in Algiers, Algeria's capital. Saadi and his female team blew apart fellow Algerians; *colones* (French nationals) who had settled in the country decades earlier; security forces from France; and others unlucky enough to go near popular expatriate nightclubs, dance halls, and cafes such as the Milk-Bar. Drif (who, after the revolution, would open a perfume shop), Bouali, Bouhired, and Lakhdari were selected by Saadi for calculated reasons: he knew their European appearance (light skin or hair, fashionable dress) and their prettiness would allow them easy passage through security cordons in the capital. The four enjoyed their roles in the FLN's nationalist revolution—one memorable photo of them posturing with guns is full of grins. But playfulness was half the package, and part of the disguise: the women were supremely effective as bomb couriers.



Left to right: Samia Lakhdari, Zohra Drif, Djamila Bouhired, Hassiba Ben Bouali

During the war, Dr. Frantz Fanon, a gifted foreigner who served the FLN as a propagandist and medical doctor, wrote with admiration of the spirit, cleverness, and resilience of women in the underground. He declared that, as Algerians found themselves in a state of "total war" with France, leaders of the FLN could "no longer exclude certain forms of combat" and "had no choice but to adopt forms of terror which until then it had rejected."<sup>14</sup> This meant the mass murder of civilians, Algerian as well as European. It also meant recruiting women as operatives. Female insurgents smuggled hand grenades or plastique bombs in



their handbags; they carried messages and battle plans within their clothes; they stood outside safe houses, managing to be inconspicuous while watching for signs that the leaders huddled within could be under French surveillance. All of this female engagement gripped the psychoanalyst and student of human nature within Fanon, who wrote a number of books and essays detailing his ideas and observations. In one movement, he imagined the liberation of Algerian women from social confines, the personal growth of women matured by fighting for political freedom, and the satisfaction one might take in fooling an occupier or killing a tyrant.

### Ireland's Troubles (1968–1998)

Western European terrorist organizations saw these qualities in women as well.

In the Irish Republican Army (IRA), armed women were a minority, but a long-standing and active minority. In 1988, when a British Special Air Service team secretly deployed to Gibraltar and shot a three-person IRA team connected with a car bomb plot intended for a British target, one of those they killed was a woman, Mairead Farrell. The young Farrell had participated in a hotel bombing near Belfast in 1976. She served 10 years in jail but emerged no less revolutionary and continued to operate until she and her two cadres died on the British “Rock” guarding the gateway to the Mediterranean.<sup>15</sup> She was neither the first Irish woman nor the last to wield a bomb. Two sisters were jailed for the IRA bombing of the Old Bailey courthouse in London in 1973: Dolours Price, who died in January 2013, said she and her sister were under orders from Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams (now a member of Parliament in the Republic of Ireland, or Eire). Two unrelated IRA women, Donna McGuire and Maria McGuire, spent years in confinement because of their participation in bomb plots at British bases on the European continent.<sup>16</sup>



Belfast mural depicting Mairead Farrell and two of her IRA colleagues

During interviews with Irish militants in Belfast in 1972, reporter Martin Dillon met a woman known by the alias Eileen, who was a long-time director of armed street fights against British soldiers. Dillon reported one street fight with awe: First he was impressed by watching an IRA man with a Thompson submachine gun angling for fighting positions. Then he found out that this fellow was

just one member of a group of men under the tactical command of Eileen, who also served her fighters tea and sandwiches from her home. Many a terrorist safe house has been managed by a clever woman, but here was a fighters' command post, based in a family home and run by the woman of the house. Years later, while still reporting, Dillon met Eileen's daughter, who had also joined the IRA women's section.<sup>17</sup> An early twentieth-century publication by a "women's wing" of the IRA called *Cumann na mBan* (Irish Gaelic for "Republican flag") reveals photos of uniformed and armed women, some of whom participated in shootouts. It appears that *Cumann na mBan* later lost its official character and was folded into the larger Provisional IRA organization. At present, one almost never hears the name.

### The Palestinian Cause (1948–present)

Women have also played prominent roles in the classic, high-profile terrorist act of airline hijacking. The first known female hijacker was Leila Khaled, who was the perfect icon of Palestinian oppression after the creation of Israel in 1948: as a child, her family had lost its possessions in a Palestinian area appropriated by the nascent state of Israel. Khaled was so devoted to the Palestinian cause that when her face, noted for its beauty, became too famous after she participated in the hijacking of Trans World Airlines Flight 840 in 1969, she had it altered in secret by a plastic surgeon so that she could qualify for a second hijacking mission. Khaled was a prized operative of the PFLP sub-commander Wadi Haddad. She thus met Venezuelan terrorist Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, known as Carlos the Jackal, and was friends with Fusako Shigenobu, the Lebanon-based leader of the JRA. Khaled's iconic image, along with her autobiography, struck political gold for her cause.<sup>18</sup> Leila Khaled is one of a hundred reasons that a Palestinian statelet was eventually constructed in the West Bank and Gaza.

Carlos the Jackal worked for the Palestinian cause with women on his operation teams. In December 1975, he employed Gabriele Kröcher-Tiedemann of the West German anarchist organization 2 June Movement. She had served jail time for terrorism, was freed in a deal that involved the release of kidnap victims, and

joined Carlos.<sup>19</sup> During an operation in Vienna, she shot down an Austrian policeman and an Iraqi guard. Another good example is Magdalena Kopp. An expert dark-room technician and a member of the German terrorist group Revolutionary Cells, Kopp made false documents for the Carlos group. She became increasingly involved, fell in love with Carlos, bore him a daughter, and ultimately married him in 1991. Kopp told an interviewer that "I dreamt of having a normal family with Carlos," but he was arrested in 1994 and currently lives in a Paris jail. Carlos also married his French attorney, yet he still sends cards to his daughter, via Magdalena, including one on

As Carlos the Jackal believes, "women ... are the other side of the revolution."

Bethlehem wall graffiti



International Women's Day, because, as Carlos believes, "women ... are the other side of the revolution."<sup>20</sup>

The PFLP often used a woman on its teams. One woman—her identity is still unclear—was on the team that, in 1976, seized a passenger airliner flying out of Athens and directed it to Entebbe, Uganda; Israeli commandos soon arrived to shoot all the terrorists and save the hostages. That same year, Fighters for Free Croatia included a woman among the hijackers who grabbed an airliner in US skies. Notably, hostages in these hijackings offered testimonials about the special venom of the females on the hijacking teams vis-à-vis the male hijackers. The women's behavior may have been calculated to further the hostages' disorientation, but it certainly also worked to heighten the general terror.

### Leftists in the United States and Europe (1965–1985)

Women have proven themselves ready to kill in terrorist situations, not just to add to the political theater. Kathy Boudin, the daughter of a lawyer famed for his leftist activism, was an integral part of the Weather Underground. After that group declined, she and certain other members—mostly women—created the May 19th Communist Organization and briefly conducted joint operations with the Black Liberation Army in the northeastern United States.<sup>21</sup> May 19th was involved in bank robberies and several gun battles with police, and Boudin was eventually convicted of a role in a multiple shooting. Fierce in her politics, like Chinese Communist revolutionary Mao Zedong, she acted in the conviction that power flows from the barrel of a gun.

In Germany, too, the violent left included women who were well prepared for shoot-outs with authorities—enough so that one German official offered the famous advice to police forces that, if confronted in the moment by multiple armed terrorists, they should "shoot the women terrorists first."<sup>22</sup> The RAF's plan to free their leader Andreas Baader from prison was conceived and directed by female RAF members. RAF leader Ulrike Meinhof, still an active journalist at the time, posed as a social scientist and won a supervised interview with Baader in a light-security room. Several RAF women along with one man were the shooters that day. The operation succeeded and led to the RAF's most active and violent period in its life span.

### Latin American Terrorists (1964–2012)

Many women form the ranks of combat infantry in the modern insurgencies that regularly use terrorism. Such all-purpose cadres are especially innumerable in Latin American insurgencies, such as Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), the Colombian National Liberation Army. As many as 10 women took part in the 19th of April Movement (M-19) guerrilla group's assault at the Palace of Justice building in Bogotá, Colombia, in November 1985. Over three dozen M-19 members participated in the attack, and some 120 people died in the ensuing shoot-outs with security forces, including 11 supreme court justices. Girls and women of assorted ages make up between one-fifth and one-third of the insurgent group the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Recent books offering first-person accounts by former hostages held by the FARC make it seem that near-equality exists in the infantry, where boys and girls, and men and women, carry weapons and manage leadership roles with little attention to their sex.



Kathy Boudin

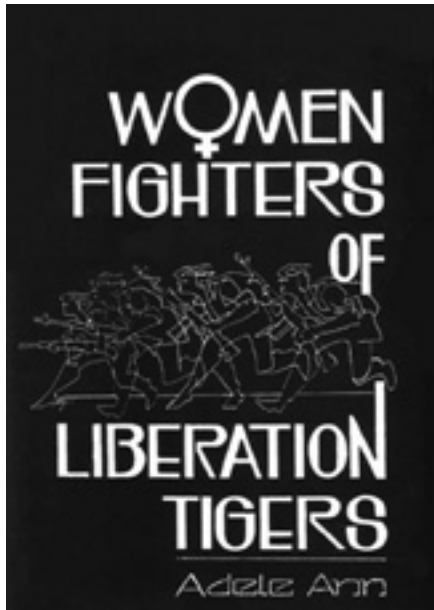
In the FARC infantry, boys and girls, and men and women, carry weapons and manage leadership roles with little attention to their sex.



Teenage girls with automatic rifles were part of the team that the Peruvian Túpac Amaru (MRTA) terrorist group used in the five-month-long hostage-taking of Lima's Japanese diplomatic residence between December 1996 and April 1997. The teenagers died along with the rest of the dozen-man team when commandos eventually retook the building.

### Asia's Insurgencies (1965–present)

Several violent movements based on the Maoist model, such as the Cambodian Khmer Rouge, included girls and women alongside males in their fighting organizations. In Nepal's recent civil war (1996–2008), the Nepalese Maoist insurgents included women in their ranks. One muscular account of female revolutionaries, *Women Fighters of Liberation Tigers*, was written by Adele Ann Balasingham.<sup>23</sup> She was the Australian wife of British citizen Anton Balasingham, LTTE's best-known diplomat, who ran an office in London that collected funds and publicized the cause of Tamil separatism from Sri Lanka. The 40-page booklet provides historical background for the female formations, narrative about their introduction into combat in 1986, and accounts of infantry fighting, survival, and heroism. The opening page promises that Tigresses have “earned an international reputation as the most fierce, highly disciplined and courageous” of female combatants. Note is made of the special units for anti-tank and anti-aircraft operations, and war with heavy weapons, as well as the more obvious roles in which females have served guerrilla forces in so many countries: “In the field of medics, communication, intelligence work, etc.,” there had been “constant expansion and growth.” This development of women under arms would surely continue, declared Balasingham, because LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran “views the successful induction of women into the armed struggle as one of his major achievements,” and he promoted “the holistic development of the women fighters, as a part of his vision of women's path to liberation.”<sup>24</sup>



LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran “views the successful induction of women into the armed struggle as one of his major achievements.”

### Myriad Roles for Women in Terrorist Organizations

In recent years it has become less unusual for women to strap themselves with explosives and blow themselves up in public places. While there is a long tradition of lethal actors among women, however, women are more often used for, and have proven adept at, the many kinds of nonlethal duties that define the success or failure of long-term underground organizational life. These roles include carrying messages and packages, analytical intelligence work, spying, bookkeeping and financial organization, and managing logistics for large and small units.

### Suicide for the Cause

Although the female hijackers of older decades broke new ground in the area of women's participation in terrorism, what captures contemporary imaginations is the phenomenon of suicide terrorism. It appears that the first female suicide terrorists of the modern era were in Lebanon.<sup>25</sup> From 1982 through 1985, Lebanese, French, and US interests were repeatedly ravaged by suicide bombings—the most deadly being vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, most often driven by men. Soon enough, Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka and Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militants in Turkey—male and female—were using the suicide bomb tactic, which also continued in the Middle East. Now it is well-established that female suicide bombers may “perform” for, horrify, and, to their way of thinking, instruct varied and global audiences.



Written in the late 1980s, the Charter of Hamas bore no suggestion that Muslim women should be killers at all, let alone suicide bombers. But Palestinian organizations debated about the use of women in terrorism, and some of these groups eventually abandoned their religious and normative reservations. Hamas and its rival organization Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade have each used women. Reem Riyashi of Gaza City, the first female suicide attacker for Hamas, will be long remembered for her propaganda poster: she stands with a rifle under one arm and a small child in the other arm, both wearing the classic green-and-white Hamas headband.<sup>26</sup>

Chechen insurgent factions have often deployed female suicide bombers, known as “black widows,” in their attacks. At the infamous takeover of a Moscow theater in October 2002, 19 members of the 40-plus-person Chechen terrorist team, most of whom were strapped with explosives, were women. Almost miraculously, none of these human bombs self-detonated before they were all overcome by gas pumped into the building by the Russian authorities.<sup>27</sup> There were so many terrorists with bombs, and they were so well-provided with explosives, that sympathetic detonations might have killed all of the approximately one thousand people in the building.

### Covert Operations, Intelligence, and Reconnaissance

Intelligence work often begins with being unsuspecting and coolly capable in public. Related to personal relations skills, it may include a capacity for getting to know people while simultaneously protecting one's true identity and real motives. Women who have excelled at this are celebrated by nearly every country's formal intelligence service, and so it is no surprise that many a non-state actress has been adept in this way. In the Algerian FLN's fight with France, the most skilled of recruits included Fatima Benosmane, described as “very cultured and perfectly trilingual” in Kabyle, Arabic, and French. She was both a professional radio announcer and a communist, but she turned toward the FLN nationalists while keeping up her reporting—a perfect profession for a covert asset because it places one closest to fresh open-source information and the resources to assess its veracity. Benosmane was eventually arrested and tortured; when released, she returned to the militant underground. More recent examples of female intelligence assets can be found in Sendero Luminoso, a Maoist guerrilla insurgent organization in Peru, which used women working as housecleaners to discover the inner secrets of important people who were potential targets.

Individuals who serve as couriers are often chosen because they do not look like the more “typical” actors in a militant organization. This fact should affect our convictions about airport and other security (e.g., “30-ish Arab-looking men must be searched,” or “It is outrageous to bother a grandmother with a search.”). No one is looked upon more generously, by women and men alike, as the pregnant woman—which is why gravid women (and imitators with appropriately shaped disguises) have been used by terrorist gangs. This matter of appearances also helps explain the use of women as “drug mules.” A law enforcement officer told one of the co-authors about the interrogation of a prominent figure in a successful interstate drug-running gang composed of African-Americans. The trafficker disclosed to police that “types” like him did not move the drugs; the organization selected white, well-dressed “businesswomen” to be couriers.<sup>28</sup>

Decades ago, Doris Katz, amateur diplomat and smuggler, “placed her ‘Aryan’ features and British passport at the disposal of the Irgun Zvai Leumi,” the Zionist

Reem Riyashi stands with a rifle under one arm and a small child in the other arm; both wear the classic green-and-white Hamas headband.



A “black widow” (left) pictured in a Russian TV capture during the Nord-Ost siege at Moscow's Dubrovka theater

Sendero Luminoso, a Maoist guerrilla insurgent organization in Peru, used women working as housecleaners to discover the inner secrets of important people.

Doris Katz, amateur diplomat and smuggler, “placed her ‘Aryan’ features and British passport at the disposal of the Irgun Zvai Leumi,” the Zionist terror and resistance organization.

terror and resistance organization led by Menachem Begin. Her role was to help move large sums of its money between Geneva, Stockholm, Paris, London, and Palestine, and she told her life story in her 1953 memoir, *The Lady Was a Terrorist*.<sup>29</sup> Her testament lends credence to a recent French film, *Outside the Law*, a rare depiction of FLN overseas operations during the Algerian war from 1954 to 1962. The Paris-based FLN support unit is depicted as collecting masses of money and using it to buy European arms for use back in Algeria. In the film’s story, the FLN operator is careful to choose a classy blonde society woman of sympathetic views to do the courier work of running his cash to Switzerland.

## Support

Finding and running safe houses for a clandestine movement or group is one of the more technical, essential, and unrewarded of terrorist tasks, and it has often fallen to women. In some cultures, at least, mature women appear very natural in the role of running a large “family” home. They shop and prepare meals for varying numbers of operatives in hiding, or even for those in the field. These women naturally control the ingress and egress of visitors from the house, and can meet or confront authorities or unexpected visitors at the door. When a clandestine guest requires health care, a woman well known in the community can bring in a sympathetic, discreet doctor. An Algerian mother of five named Oukhiti became famous for the skills she showed in hiding senior FLN decision makers in her home. More recently, in the 1980s, New Yorker Lori Berenson, a passionate radical—perhaps a fanatic, if her courtroom performance is any indicator—went to Peru on a journalist’s credentials and became enmeshed with the MRTA, a radical leftist terrorist organization with a strong presence in Lima. She opened her house to the MRTA unit planning a major operation in the capital building. Berenson was eventually arrested, served years in jail, and remains in Peru on probation.

Financial support is a key logistical asset to a terrorist organization, and some women have excelled in such roles. In the RAF in Germany, Gudrun Ensslin often handled the group’s money, while Ulrike Meinhof would choose the safe houses. While many terrorist gangs may live hand-to-mouth, or depend on the latest bank robbery or foreign state donation, Japan’s Aum Shinrikyo cult deserves notice for the orderly and successful ways it pursued business. Aum companies created and sold computers and software, and also operated noodle shops. Recruits entering the cult had to hand over their personal assets. Shoko Asahara, the man who set himself up as a mystic and the group’s tyrannical spiritual leader, was a yoga teacher who made money from his many yoga studios and wrote his own line of books and magazines. Some investigators believe that Aum’s land and other assets were worth as much as one billion US dollars by the time of Aum Shinrikyo’s collapse in 1995 after the cult’s sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway system.

Many women, including Hisako Ishii, joined Aum Shinrikyo, a hierarchical organization in which some women had considerable authority.

Many women, including Hisako Ishii, joined Aum Shinrikyo, a hierarchical organization in which some women had considerable authority. Ishii had been an office worker in the insurance field prior to joining the group and helped Asahara manage the group’s money and possessions. Those included everything from a one-time conference hall rental inside the Kremlin, to a ranch in Australia, to a Russian military helicopter. When Asahara grew ambitious enough to imagine taking over the governing of Japan (after destroying its liberal republic), he told Ishii she would be the minister of finance, a dream that ended with the mass arrests that broke up Aum in 1995.<sup>30</sup>

Weapons development is another role that some women have embraced, despite the field's domination by males. When an IRA cell called the Boston Three was arrested in the United States while developing a shoulder-fired missile, analysts paid little attention to the fact that one of the underground engineers was Christine Reid of California. Her contribution is briefly noted in a few IRA memoirs and obscure newspaper stories.<sup>31</sup>

Al Qaeda leaders tried for years to buy a nuclear weapon, failing at all turns. The group had voluntary support from Aafia Siddiqui, a woman who held a scientific degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a PhD in neuroscience from Brandeis University. She served as a courier and financier for al Qaeda. When she was arrested, it became evident that she was engaged in professional investigations into weapons of mass destruction. During her arrest in Afghanistan, she leapt to seize a soldier's loaded weapon and fired on Americans in the room. She was wounded and subdued while screaming, "Allahu Akbar!"

Bioweapons research is enticing to global terrorists who want to inflict mass casualties. While the handling and weaponizing of these living media are difficult—and dangerous—the Rajneesh cult demonstrated that it can be done. Under the spiritual guidance of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, this group was active in a rural part of the US state of Oregon from 1981 to 1985. A businesswoman called Ma Anand Sheela, who was Rajneesh's chief administrator, and a nurse practitioner named Ma Anand Puja (whom some members reportedly referred to as "Dr. Mengele") led a bioweapon development project based on the potentially deadly salmonella bacterium.<sup>32</sup> Their goal was to prevent voters from coming to the polls in a local election, so that Rajneesh's followers could take political control of the small town of Antelope. Cult members infected a number of salad bars and other locations in area restaurants with a fluid concentration of salmonella and succeeded in sickening more than 170 people (none died). The plot failed, and Puja and Sheela were among the women and men arrested. This bio-attack has proven to be a one-of-a-kind terrorist incident that relied on basic science. But the two women at the top of the equation remind us of the misleading nature of the stereotype that all terrorists will be male.

Aafia Siddiqui leapt to seize a soldier's loaded weapon and fired on Americans in the room. She was wounded and subdued while screaming, "Allahu Akbar!"



Aafia Siddiqui

## Motivations for Terrorism

In 2004, a militant Islamist cell called the Hofstad group murdered Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, whom the group considered to be a political enemy. After Dutch police and intelligence services arrested the Hofstad group, investigations uncovered the presence and involvement of a large circle of women who were the siblings, wives, daughters, friends, or lovers of the male defendants. Journalists Janny Groen and Annieke Kranenberg, who interviewed the circle of women around Hofstad for months, found that although the women apparently did not do the actual killing, they were deeply involved in the group for reasons that were similar to those of the men. These Dutch women, who wore veils when attending the trials of their male counterparts, talked voluminously with the two journalists, saying they did so as a form of outreach, of religious "struggle."

Showing "extreme dedication" to religious study, the women were also followers and propagators of violent jihadist literature. They carried and reproduced pamphlets, and sometimes served as translators because they knew Arabic, English, and/or Dutch. They listened avidly to extremist audiotapes and read long, violent tracts that circulated as e-mail attachments. They expressed their passion, and desire for justice and revenge, freely in chat rooms and on websites

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These women rebels displayed special fervor because the rebellion opened up access to social and political roles that Algeria’s traditional Muslim and Arab culture had denied them.

The promise of glamour and adventure also lures men and women alike to conduct internationally sensational acts of terrorism.

where their sex was no obstacle. The then-director of Holland’s General Intelligence and Security Service called the internet the “turbo engine of the jihad movement,” and it became clear that these Dutch women—more than Dutch men—were its cyber-accelerators.<sup>33</sup>

Generally, the evidence indicates that women join terrorist movements and insurgencies for many of the same reasons that men do. There is, above all, the sense of new prospects in a future one has helped to shape—a vision that combines idealism, hope, and the rebelliousness that many young people feel and vent in either political or nonpolitical ways.<sup>34</sup> In 1959, Dr. Frantz Fanon wrote an essay called “Algeria Unveiled” about the women in the FLN, whom he portrayed as being moved, like the men, by revolutionary spirit. These women rebels displayed special fervor because the rebellion opened up access to social and political roles that Algeria’s traditional Muslim and Arab culture had denied them. A world away and a generation later, journalist Eileen MacDonald interviewed many female revolutionaries from conflict zones around the world and reached a similar conclusion.<sup>35</sup>

The standard explanations for why people become terrorists start with the essentials of terrorism: politics, psychology, religion, power, the lust for glamour and adventure, and even sadism. First is the attraction to politics: from late nineteenth-century anarchist groups in Russia and Europe to the members of the European undergrounds of the 1960s and 1970s, both men and women members shared similar political outlooks. Individual psychology is a second underlying factor in terrorism: rebelliousness and lust for action doubtless move young women into terrorism. In groups such as the Weather Underground in the United States, many of the female members demonstrated a drive for action.

Religion is yet another motivation for terrorist activities. Since the early 1990s, a majority of new international terrorist groups have been founded on religious grounds.<sup>36</sup> Aum Shinrikyo, the Japanese religious cult, and the Rajneesh spiritual community had large numbers of female cadre, some of whom were at senior management levels. And despite stereotypes of Muslim women as sequestered non-activists, Muslim women are increasingly joining the ranks of terrorist groups.<sup>37</sup> British citizen Samantha Lewthwaite married a London-based Muslim terrorist named Habib Saleh Ghani and has written about her desire to raise all her children to be mujahedeen. In early 2013, she was living under a false name in Mombasa, Kenya, possibly as a sort of den mother to a terrorist cell: Interpol’s arrest warrant includes charges for possession of explosives and terror conspiracies dating to late 2011. Police recovered her personal papers, among which were the beginnings of a draft booklet in her handwriting showing her struggles with the right way for a woman to conduct jihad.<sup>38</sup>

We cannot overlook the drive for power that motives some women: Bernardine Dohrn and many of the female leaders of the Peruvian group Sendero Luminoso shared this drive. Sendero leader Abimael Guzmán surrounded himself with female subordinate officers, whose orders could mean life and death to the less powerful. The promise of glamour and adventure also lures men and women alike to conduct internationally sensational acts of terrorism. When Gudrun Ensslin and Andreas Baader of the Baader-Meinhof group torched a department store or roared through city streets in a stolen car firing guns, it was the wild-eyed rebel in them, rather than Leninist theory, that drove their behavior.



Finally, it must be added that some of the uglier sides of terrorism have to do with another motive, evident in terrorists such as Abu Nidal: sadism and rank evil.<sup>39</sup> Inside Aum Shinrikyo, where ferocious discipline and corporal punishment were common, women officials were reportedly as cruel as men, and actively helped produce the weaponized sarin. Ma Anand Puja, the nurse and bioweapons designer for the Rajneesh cult, is a further example. Just as the crime world has female sadists, so too does the politicized environment of modern terrorism.

### Some Unique Motives for Women

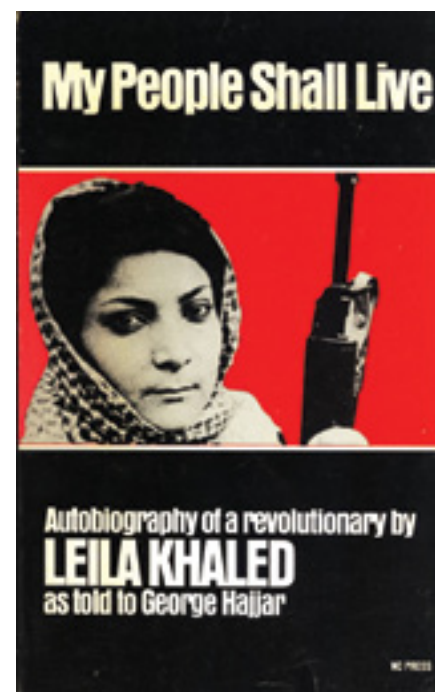
Are there also special motivations for female terrorists? As FLN proponent Dr. Frantz Fanon suggested, women may move toward violence when living within a closed or sexist society that denies them full civil rights and economic opportunities. Algerian women of the 1950s viewed themselves as breaking out of traditional Islamic roles: at the same time that they were freeing themselves from male expectations, they were freeing their fellow Algerians from French political subjugation. Sadly, after the victory of the FLN in 1962, although Algeria did receive independence from France, Algerian women did not achieve the same freedom or independence for their own sex. Their testaments have echoes now, in the dashed hopes of Muslim women after the 2011 and 2012 revolutions in Egypt. The aspirations for equality that women saw coming to fulfillment recently through the protests in Cairo's Tahrir Square have been all but reversed by a reactionary crackdown.

The desire to break out of traditional female roles may also come from a more secular politico-cultural context, as it did for Leila Khaled, the icon of the PFLP. According to her memoir *My People Shall Live*, although Khaled had significantly higher grades and success in school than her brother, she was forced to withdraw from the American University of Beirut after only a year so that her parents could afford to pay for her brother's university education. Immediately after her withdrawal from school, Khaled shifted her energies to training as a guerrilla with the PFLP.

The chance to rise swiftly in the political realm was also important to nascent terrorists in Latin America in the 1960s. Young women of the secular political left flooded into violent undergrounds and were in fact often treated equally, or better, vis-à-vis male cadres. Violent politics thus became a kind of social equalizer for women and men.

Secondly, romantic ties can draw women into terrorism. Former CIA profiler Jerrold M. Post emphasizes this reason in his book *The Mind of the Terrorist*.<sup>40</sup> Our research indicates that such cases are a small but meaningful minority. Some women and girls enter a group when their boyfriend does; or if he is already a member, over time she too is drawn in. A number of terrorist groups include women who are, or become, leaders' lovers: Gudrun Ensslin was the lover of Andreas Baader in the Red Army Faction; Magdalena Kopp married Carlos the Jackal. The cases of "terror for love" are markedly separable from a much larger group, in which girls are forcibly recruited into guerrilla undergrounds and then expected to cook and nurse and be sexual partners to the male officers. In our era, this has befallen thousands of girls in the rural areas of Africa, Asia, and Latin America—there is nothing unique about the practices of the LRA.

Women may move toward violence when living within a closed or sexist society that denies them full civil rights and economic opportunities.



Women who are wives, mothers, sisters, or daughters of terrorists may end up advocating for their male family members when the men are arrested.

Family ties can also draw women willingly or unwillingly into terrorist groups. Women who are wives, mothers, sisters, or daughters of terrorists may end up advocating for their male family members when the men are arrested or jailed. Irish Republican women who backed the IRA Provos (Provisional Irish Republican Army) would make an excellent subject for the study of this phenomenon. Partisan newspapers, such as those published in New York City, and of course the IRA paper *An Phoblacht* (“Republican News”), printed a steady supply of sympathetic stories that played up the families of the men. Publicity campaigners spoke and wrote of each convict as a man who had babies at home whom he had not seen, or an unemployed sister, or an elderly mother who desperately needed the jailed man’s aid. Doubtless many such stories were true. Doubtless they made for good press, with their attractive personal testimonies and sad photographs. Women such as Rita O’Hare of the Irish Northern Aid Committee made a career out of political work of this kind. She felt deeply for those in jail and had herself been jailed for IRA activity. She was a Sinn Féin representative and also worked for years at *The Irish People*, a political newspaper whose every issue offered fresh news and commentary in support of prisoners by name.

Revenge can be another strong motive, as it is for many of the Chechen “Black Widows” whose husbands, sons, and brothers died fighting for independence from Russia.

Finally, the quest for redemption and honor following a disgrace or marginalization motivates some women to conduct terrorist acts—a pattern that has attracted great attention with the increase of female suicide terrorism.<sup>41</sup> Studies of surviving female suicide bombers, as well as the biographies of those who died in the act, suggest that a significant percentage had been raped, divorced, or socially humiliated and marginalized through physical disfigurement, in some cases deliberately by men in the terrorist organization.<sup>42</sup> If life brought disgrace, these women hoped that death would bring honor. For some it did. Posthumous iconic status and material benefits to the bomber’s family are central reasons for these women to willingly self-destroy. Revenge can be another strong motive, as it is for many of the Chechen “Black Widows” whose husbands, sons, and brothers died fighting for independence from Russia.<sup>43</sup>

### Special Roles for Women in Terrorism

Counterterrorism professionals must recognize what many violent covert organizations already know: female actors can turn traditional stereotypes about women’s roles to their tactical and operational advantage. Guerrilla war strategist Che Guevara wrote, “Women can be assigned a considerable number of specific occupations. ...Perhaps the most important is communication between different combatant forces, above all, between those that are in enemy territory.”<sup>44</sup> Although men and women can equally fill most of the roles in terrorist organizations, there are a few special roles that women can play to great advantage. If al Qaeda has only rarely deployed women to date, we should expect that it will deploy more of them in the future, for some of the following reasons.

If al Qaeda has only rarely deployed women to date, we should expect that it will deploy more of them in the future.

First, because women are traditionally seen as unthreatening, they are well suited to roles as couriers and messengers, as Guevara noted in the preceding quotation. The general profile of the terrorist is a young male, which makes it relatively easier for a girl or woman to avoid close examination. Gender expectations and custom make them less likely to be physically searched, especially by men. This was the premise of the FLN men who selected willing young ladies to be bomb couriers in Algiers in 1956 and 1957. PFLP hijacker Khaled, a smooth professional and a self-assured beauty at the same time, was able to smuggle a bomb onto an El Al airplane even though she ostensibly was searched before boarding. Among

Muslims, both women and men have used the customary long veils and robes of female attire to smuggle weapons of war and terror. Suicide bombers have not only moved plastique and other explosives with ease, but some women have also played explicitly on the shape of their body by molding the pliable explosive material around breast or hip areas to better disguise their payload. Nor can a woman's "baby bump" always be trusted. In one case that took place in Cologne in 1977, a baby stroller concealing submachine guns was used by German militants to stop a kidnapping victim's car.<sup>45</sup>

Second, pairing a woman with a man so that they appear to be lovers or family can reduce suspicion toward the man as well as the woman. In the South Korean airliner bombing in 1987, airline security failed to suspect that the sweet "granddaughter" Kim Hyun Hee and her "grandfather" were actually deadly terrorists. IRA Provo member Maria McGuire played a similar role when she was assigned to accompany a more seasoned male IRA operative on a 1971 arms-buying expedition to the European continent. Hoteliers and other observers took them for a couple—and in fact, they fell in love and were thus convincing, for a while. Their ambitious and complex mission was to buy a large stockpile of weapons from a Communist Czech supplier; they succeeded in getting the arms as far as a warehouse in Holland before they were exposed. McGuire's memoir records her relish of the enterprise.<sup>46</sup>

A third role, familiar in crime and political subterfuge, is the use of sex appeal and beauty to glamorize terrorism. Any media expert recognizes what many terrorist organizers recognize: if there is anything more attention-grabbing than terrorism, it is a beautiful female terrorist. Such women offer the greatest shock value and public profile for their violent actions, both of which are essential to the calculated process of attracting public attention through violence. The youth and calculated charms of Kim added significantly to the media drama after the bombing of the South Korean airliner. Lolita Lebrón's dramatic, glamorous, and photogenic image was used for years after the attack on the US House of Representatives to garner sympathy for the Puerto Rican independence movement. Photos of Leila Khaled became so popular after her first hijacking escapade that she elected to have plastic surgery to avoid detection on her second attempt. Although not all female terrorists are beautiful or have a dramatic flair that appeals to the public, those who do have been very successful in gaining needed media attention for terrorist causes.

Fourth is the similar and related role of tactical "lure." In several cases, women have used their beauty not merely to evade detection or jail but to deliberately lure a lustful victim to his death. The Sandinistas, a revolutionary guerrilla movement in Nicaragua that came to power in 1979, were led by men. But the upper echelons of leadership, as well as the lower ones, included many women, including the respected, smart, multilingual, and attractive Nora Astorga. Early in the Sandinistas' insurgent campaign to oust Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza, Astorga was assigned to seduce the general who was second in command of the state armed forces; instead of a tryst, however, he was knifed by assassins hidden in the room. Astorga later took command of a Sandinista military squad, and eventually became a high-profile political figure and diplomat in the Sandinista government.<sup>47</sup>

Another famed terrorist who served as a lure is Idoia Lopez-Riano of the Basque separatist organization ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna). A somewhat lurid 2011

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Conscripted women and girls in units of the Tamil Tigers' combat forces posed serious ethical problems for the Sri Lankan security forces, who were loath to shoot.

account in the British *Daily Telegraph* newspaper informed readers that this “green-eyed femme fatale” was nicknamed “La Tigresa” for her success in seducing Spanish security officers.<sup>48</sup> Twenty-three people died thanks to her. While some terrorist organizations might avoid such a scheme out of religious scruple, other groups have found the operational advantages of deploying a seductive woman irresistible. Even a zealously religious organization might accept foreign women or converts who volunteer for these specialized covert operations.

Fifth and finally, it must be noted that not all female terrorists assume their roles by choice. Some are victims pulled, in effect, into underground organizations by gun-wielding kidnapers. Prominent newspaper heiress Patty Hearst was dragged from her Berkeley, California, residence and subjected to appalling treatment by her male and female “comrades” in the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) before becoming an apparently willing participant in armed robbery. Hundreds of village girls have been treated similarly in Africa by the male members of the LRA, Boko Haram, and other insurgencies. In a half-dozen Asian insurgencies, such forced mobilization of girls and women has occurred with some frequency. Even in Sri Lanka, where the Tamil Tiger insurgency included self-identified and proud all-female fighting units, some women began by being “drafted” by Tamil Tigers with guns. Yet even conscripted women can provide an operational advantage to terrorist groups that exploit natural concern for the “helpless female victim” to make security forces back down or negotiate. Thus the SLA sought, unsuccessfully, to use Hearst to gain money and concessions from the government, including the release of two members of their terrorist organization. The use of conscripted women and girls in units of the Tamil Tigers' combat forces posed serious ethical problems for the Sri Lankan security forces, who were loath to shoot those they took to be innocent victims.

## Conclusions

While some still believe the female terrorist to be a rare bird, in fact what is rare is finding a proficient terrorist organization that does *not* include female cadre, support staff, or volunteers. It is true that most fighting units of al Qaeda have no women. Yet there was a highly active female circle around the males in the Sunni extremist Hofstad group in Holland a decade ago.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, it is notable that recent issues of *Inspire*—a jihadist magazine that al Qaeda created initially with men in mind—have departed from traditional norms. The magazine now has a “Sister’s Corner,” and at least three recent stories have been devoted to the desire of the “good” Muslim woman to join the fight.<sup>50</sup> The World Wide Web has also seen the publication of “zines” aimed directly at radical Muslim women.

Women who belong to neo-Nazi groups in Europe, Russia, and the United States are rarely tracked by authorities—for many of the misguided reasons mentioned earlier—but rightist parties and groups often do have female members who “are anti-feminist, aware of tradition and devoted to their nation,” according to one such proud nationalist.<sup>51</sup>

According to a 2010 estimate by the German Office for the Protection of the Constitution, there are 25,000 far-right extremists inside the country, but only 11 percent were believed to be women. Although they account for a relatively small number, roughly half of the women who are involved in the scene were recorded as holding leadership positions within nationalist political organizations.<sup>52</sup>

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US neofascist propaganda often plays to female readers in obvious ways. In killings carried out by the far right in Germany between 2000 and 2007, one of the three individuals leading the so-called National Socialist Underground was a woman named Beate Zschape. While a German security official's famous warning to "shoot the women terrorists first" may be somewhat exaggerated, there are cases in postwar Germany to substantiate his point. The remark deserves at least passing mention as a corrective for our current prejudices. What is apparent is that women are deeply involved in contemporary terrorism of all kinds at many levels, including as top leaders and more frequently as second-tier leaders. Many women perform in such vital roles as logistics and even weapons development or procurement. Tens of thousands of women have been cadre in terrorist undergrounds and insurgencies in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, everywhere in the world.

Due to the gap between the current assumptions and global realities about women as terrorists, the presence of women in violent sub-state groups presents a real danger, along with important kinds of challenges. The counterterrorism community needs first of all to reevaluate its intelligence processes and assumptions. Recent counterinsurgency operations have improved the intelligence assessment process and led to the development of female engagement teams of various kinds. But it is still easy to underestimate the many ways in which women routinely play vital roles in terrorist organizations, especially in nursing, finance, management of safe houses, reconnaissance, courier activities, and more recently, suicide bombings. The more pressure that armed forces place on men in asymmetric warfare, the more important such women become, and the more likely they are to be armed. The proliferation of small arms and the relative lightness of new semiautomatic weapons such as the Kalashnikov mean that mature girls must also be considered as possible tactical threats in a conflict environment, as weapons couriers, bomb setters, or even infantry in rural guerrilla wars. As for smaller terrorist gangs, the ways we write about and understand them indicate that we still do not expect to see women in combat roles.

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It is apparent that terrorist profiling in airline and public transit security should be reevaluated. Even if most shooters are males, that need not be true of the people and organizations that supply and pay them, carry their intelligence packets and false documents, or do reconnaissance. Limited but specialized training of new security personnel is essential to the proper understanding of how terrorism works. At transit portals, female security teams are needed to search American women as well as passengers from other countries, as is already the norm in many airports and train stations around the world. In common crime, women are less active and less lethal. But in political terrorism, that is not at all true. Women can kill, and often have, for a number of reasons—in this they are not so different from their male cohorts. ❖

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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## NOTES

- 1 All views herein are the authors' own and not those of the US government, the US Department of Defense, or any other official US entity.
- 2 Kim Hyun Hee, *The Tears of My Soul* (New York: Wm. Morrow & Co., 1993).
- 3 A former divisional commander from the Sri Lankan army, replying to a question from Dr. Harmon, February 2013.
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- 14 Frantz Fanon, "Algeria Unveiled," in *A Dying Colonialism* (1959; repr., New York: Grove Press, 1999), 48, 55.
- 15 For an account of the action in Gibraltar, see "1988: IRA Gang Shot Dead in Gibraltar," BBC, 7 March 1988: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/march/7/newsid\\_2516000/2516155.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/march/7/newsid_2516000/2516155.stm)
- 16 *New York Times* obituary for Dolours Price, 25 January 2013: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/26/world/europe/dolours-price-defiant-ira-bomber-dies-at-61.html>. Sinn Féin has been the political party of Irish Republicans since 1905 and currently holds parliamentary seats in both the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland; and Maria McGuire, *To Take Arms: My Year with the IRA Provisionals* (New York: Viking Press, 1973).
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- 24 Balasingham, *Women Fighters of Liberation Tigers*. Balasingham is also the author of *The Will to Freedom: An Inside View of the Tamil Resistance* (London: Fairmax Publishing, 2001). See also the autobiography of Niromi de Soyza, *Tamil Tigress: My Story as a Child Soldier in Sri Lanka's Bloody Civil War* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2012). Prabhakaran was killed in a battle with Sri Lankan forces in 2009 that ended the Tamil insurgency.
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- 27 US Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: 2003), 32–33.
- 28 Dr. Holmes-Eber's interview with anonymous law enforcement officer, Quantico, VA, 2012.
- 29 Doris Katz, *The Lady Was a Terrorist—During Israel's War of Liberation* (New York: Shiloni Publishers, 1953).
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- 44 Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. J. P. Morray (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 86.
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- 48 Fiona Govan, "La Tigresa Kicked Out of ETA after Renouncing Violence," *Daily Telegraph*, 23 November 2011: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/spain/8910436/La-Tigresa-kicked-out-of-ETA-after-renouncing-violence.html>; Jerrold Post's book also includes a spicy quotation from "La Tigresa" about the extra militancy females must show to prove themselves in a male-dominated terrorist organization. See Post, *The Mind of a Terrorist*, 59.
- 49 Groen and Kranenberg, *Women Warriors for Allah*.
- 50 Of course, few *Inspire* articles advocate fighting by women. One senses a debate among doctrinaires of that sort that occurred years ago within some Palestinian militant circles and led to changes in group policies that allowed women to fight and conduct suicide "martyrdom" operations. The two short articles appear under presumed pseudonyms (Iaie Faya and Umm Yahya) in *Inspire* 10 (2013), 30–31.
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- 52 Ibid.

# Of Culture and Cliché: Politics and the Uses (and Abuses) of Anthropology

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Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere,  
diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong remedies.  
— Groucho Marx<sup>1</sup>

An uncritical reliance on cultural  
factors to determine military  
strategy or predict political  
behavior can be perilous.

It's not a question of  
*whether* culture matters,  
but *how* it matters.

WHEN WE TRY TO USE ANTHROPOLOGY TO MORE EFFECTIVELY CONDUCT war, we can find ourselves with a flawed understanding of both culture and warfare. In theory, the consideration of culture is a good thing, and cultural insight can be especially helpful in a time of military occupation at every point along the occupation spectrum, from peacekeeping to counterinsurgency. But when it comes to developing strategic depth and understanding, overly deterministic cultural explanations will likely cause more harm than good. In this paper, I argue that while recognizing culture and social identity are important considerations in the construction of both foreign policy and warfare, an uncritical reliance on cultural factors to determine military strategy or predict political behavior can be perilous. We must not overlook the important role that material experience plays in defining cultural parameters, or downplay the complex interplay between culture, policy, and war. A static view of culture leads us to the false perception that our opponents will always follow predictable foreign policies and strategies of war.

To be sure, the cultural approach to understanding human behavior has notable merits and so, like the proverbial baby, should not be thrown out with the bathwater. This paper is not a call to ignore the fact that “culture exists,” but rather is a friendly reminder that we must do a better job of understanding what culture might mean in terms of real people; it’s not a question of *whether* culture matters, but *how* it matters. If we insist on clinging to an ahistorical and defective account of culture that depicts “others” as inscrutably exotic and incapable of contradiction or dynamic change, we will end up profoundly misunderstanding them and will constantly be surprised by them.

## What Culture Doesn't Do

The relationship between groups can be dialectic. For instance, the evidence shows that many insurgents are realists of a sort who do not necessarily conform to the traditions of their native culture. Instead, like us, they can demonstrate a surprising readiness to feed off global information and defy tradition in favor of practicality, if that will help them achieve success. They are able to rewrite their codes and rules as needed. They can be influenced by us (and our Twitter accounts), just as we can be influenced by them. At a larger level, the policies of regimes—like the human beings they are composed of—can be driven by different, competing, and at times contradictory impulses. Predicting a regime or an insurgent group’s behavior based on cultural characteristics can be tricky and requires discerning the consistencies and disconnects between what people say, what they think or imagine about themselves, and what they actually do.



These things can be quite different, of course. By drawing sharp boundaries to corral and separate cultures into simplified categories, we tend to exaggerate the differences between categories and underestimate differences *within* categories. We also risk overlooking the ways in which ideas traverse such boundaries. This approach fundamentally misconceives what culture is.

A culturally deterministic approach rests on profoundly incorrect ideas of the ways in which cultures operate, particularly during war and other crises, and tends to evoke stereotypical categories of “Western” and “Eastern” warfare.<sup>2</sup> The Western stereotype—guileless descendants of Clausewitz who march in step with a military band, or knights clad in heavy armor who embody the ideas of blunt force and superior strength—contrasts with the Eastern stereotype, which imagines deceitful minions of Sun Tzu leading hordes of archers who timidly avoid a direct battlefield charge. The facts, of course, mock such overwrought assumptions. Early Iranian tribes like the Massagetae (and later the Sassanid Persians) are in fact thought to be the originators of the class of armored cavalry known as *cataphract*, while the Iran-Iraq War of 1980 to 1988 in some ways resembled the Western front in World War I: both featured the mass slaughter of young men who charged headlong to their deaths and the use of poison gas (by at least one side). Also contrary to stereotypes, in 1944 the Western Allies carried out what was arguably the most brilliantly deceitful act of twentieth-century warfare (Operation Bodyguard) to mislead German intelligence regarding the D-Day invasion of Normandy.<sup>3</sup> The military marching band, so emblematic of Western esprit de corps, was introduced into Western Europe through the Ottoman Turks, whose martial music also helped inspire such European classical composers as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven.

A culturally deterministic approach rests on profoundly incorrect ideas of the ways in which cultures operate, particularly during war and other crises.

There are numerous other such examples of how wrong stereotypes can be,<sup>4</sup> but the point is that history viewed through a culturally deterministic lens is not just bad history, it is fraught with potential strategic costs. Ironically then, though its purpose is to enhance sensitivity to the subtle and not so subtle distinctions among cultures, a culturally deterministic view helps promote an unsophisticated, essentialized, and crude view of culture, foreign policy, and strategies of war.

## “War of the Worlds”

This is a “war of the worlds” in the cultural sense, a head-on collision between civilizations from different galaxies.

— LTC (retired) Ralph Peters<sup>5</sup>

Let us imagine that there is some definable quality that differentiates people into categories we call *cultures*. It might even be useful to imagine “essential” differences between groups of people. The problem arises, however, when we conflate cultural attributes with a group of preordained, scripted, or genetic attributes. There may be stereotypic (even essential) differences between groups of people today that were shaped by those groups’ cultural history, but we must not forget that there was in fact cultural *history*. In other words, culture is a dynamic quality that evolves over time. Thus, any categorization scheme, however accurate, must also incorporate this potential for change. To see the Taliban, for example, as being from an entirely different planet or galaxy, as LTC Peters apparently does, according to his quote above, is to seriously underestimate the agility, freedom, and alacrity with which the Taliban can adapt, adopt, and transform strategies

The “otherness” of the outsider, especially the enemy, serves as a marker we use to define ourselves and establish our own identities.

to cope with changing circumstances. The assumption that the Taliban (or any other group) are so alien as to be unknowable can also prevent us from paying attention to the available evidence when we try to understand their motivations.

Of course, the notion of fighting against a culturally alien enemy holds a powerful attraction, at least in part because the “otherness” of the outsider, especially the enemy, serves as a marker we use to define ourselves and establish our own identities. So when we describe the enemy as primitive, barbaric, and irrational, it’s also a way of saying who we are: modern, civilized, and rational. But, of course, this impulse can also be off the mark. Westerners historically have debated our understanding of ourselves through the lens of the enemy, from the ancient Persians through the Soviet Union all the way to today’s Taliban. The impulse to categorize and simplify group identities in turn can affect the way we read and interpret history. We tend to extrapolate the same themes and assumptions that we embrace now to the past and then imagine them to be eternal.

Alexander soon came to admire what he found in his new territories, adopting Persian titles, dress, and courtly manner.

An example of what we might call retrospective cultural determinism can be found in our popular understanding of Alexander the Great’s invasion of Persia. Reading certain history books or watching certain recent films might lead us to believe that the ancient Persians existed to be conquered by Alexander the Great. Slightly more nuanced minds might make the argument that Alexander’s war against Persia was retribution for two prior wars that the Persians had launched against the Greek city-states. Some may even be tempted to see Alexander’s march as the first of many attempts by “civilized Europe” to bring its light to the “barbaric East.” But in truth, Alexander deemed the Persian Empire to be worth conquering because of its wealth and not because it was in need of civilizing. In fact, much like the Huns who would later sack Rome or the Vikings who periodically raided the British Isles, Alexander soon came to admire what he found in his new territory, adopting Persian titles, dress, and courtly manner. From a Persian perspective, of course, Alexander was not so great. Among the many uncivilized things he did, his armies looted and burned the great city of Persepolis, and he is thought to have encouraged similar mayhem against other cultural and religious (e.g., Zoroastrian) sites throughout his new realm. What is most often overlooked in these various interpretations of history is that the Persians and the Greeks were in contact well before Alexander’s invasion and were in fact deeply influencing each other in such areas as the arts, architecture, philosophy, religion, worldview, and so on. Alexander’s conquest merely amplified such syncretism.

Even knowing this, it is still tempting to imagine that different ethnic or national groups are of fundamentally different kinds,<sup>6</sup> and that cultures are sharply distinct and bounded. We can readily imagine that the ancient Greek and Persian cultures existed in isolation from one another and interacted only through warfare, but cultures haven’t been homogenous or necessarily quarantined to territorial boundaries since emigration, trade, and exploration began. Cultural borders are porous, especially with the advent of modern globalization and social media, and we should not ignore the reality of continuous and dialectical interaction.

The recent push in US policy and military circles to emphasize the cultural dimension in strategic assessment may be driven by a variety of forces. On the one hand, it is likely inspired by the failures of recent American military operations to deliver the desired political outcomes. After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, which Americans like to presume was predicated on US efforts,<sup>7</sup> the

thinking was that its better intelligence and superior weapons, satellites, and drones would give the United States technological supremacy over the battlespace and make it invincible.<sup>8</sup> Because this has not turned out to be the case, even against vastly technologically inferior foes, the fashion of invoking culture as a significant factor in war may be an antidote to the failed hubris of technological superiority.

On the other hand, Americans' shift towards cultural explanations for the decline in US power may also be a reaction to the world's growing rejection of the United States' cultural and commercial hegemony and the pressure to remake the planet in America's image through globalization. Such a universalist vision, some would argue, has been the source of much of the recent troubles in various regions of the world, and is becoming largely unfashionable, for good reason. Nevertheless, one need not be Edward Said to point out the danger in embracing the opposite idea—the idea of *orientalism*—which postulates an ancient, fundamental, and unchanging difference between people.<sup>9</sup> This kind of simplistic dualism is also sometimes used to account for why desired political changes—such as embracing Western democratic liberalism—have not been embraced in chronically troubled spots like the Middle East. In a sense, there has been a swing from thinking they're just like us to thinking they're nothing like us.

The fashion of invoking culture as a significant factor in war may be an antidote to the failed hubris of technological superiority.

## Culture as a Weapon

When I hear [the word] culture ... I release the safety from my Browning!

— Thiemann, from the play *Schlageter*<sup>10</sup>

In late September 2001, Maulana Inyadullah, who had begun fighting the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the age of 16, in 1982, was holed up in Peshawar. On the eve of the American-led invasion of Afghanistan, he offered this pithy sound bite to David Blair of Britain's *Daily Telegraph*: "The Americans love Pepsi Cola, we love death."<sup>11</sup> Of course this statement is appalling and shocking, but then again, in all likelihood, it was meant to be. In other words, Inyadullah's sneer is simply good propaganda, designed to evoke fear in the enemy by sounding as brutal, savage, and inhuman as possible. The real threat, however, is that we have leapt to embrace assumptions about groups like the Taliban (and most recently, ISIS—the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria)<sup>12</sup> according to what they say to Western reporters and the image they project when they pose for us in photographs that appear in Western publications: angry, uncompromising, draconian theocrats and tribal warriors who are stuck in amber, slaves to their culture.

In a sense, there has been a swing from thinking they're just like us to thinking they're nothing like us.

Those menacing propaganda photos stand in stark contrast to the way the Taliban present themselves to the camera when posing for personal photographs. Not long after the Taliban lost control of Kandahar and fled from the city, photographer Thomas Dworzak visited Kandahar's local photography studio, the Shah Zadah Studio, and discovered photographs apparently left behind by Afghan Taliban soldiers who had come in for a "flattering portrait, retouched by the photographer, secretly taken in the back room studio and decorated the best the photographer could manage."<sup>13</sup> Here, in intimate photographs that were clearly meant for private consumption, were Afghan men in surreal poses like so many silent-era movie stars, standing or sitting against cheerful backdrops of what look like Swiss mountain villages. These images are especially ironic and

The men aren't quite the snarling soldiers we're used to seeing. On the contrary, many hold flowers alongside their guns.

even touching, not merely because they defy the Taliban's mandate against images of living beings, but because the men aren't quite the snarling soldiers we're used to seeing. On the contrary, many hold flowers alongside their guns. In some photos, they affectionately throw their arms around one another. These intimate photographs are as disorienting to Western eyes as if Sylvester Stallone as Rambo and Arnold Schwarzenegger as the Terminator were to show up in a film toting their automatic weapons, only to smile, hug each other, and begin to exchange gardening tips.<sup>14</sup>

We need to remember that the popularized version of any phenomenon is likely not fully real. To continue with our example, the Taliban certainly do cultivate a particularly draconian form of orientalist nostalgia,<sup>15</sup> but history shows us that they are also practical: they are innovative, and they break with tradition when it serves their purpose. The term *Taliban* ("student" or "seeker" in Arabic) has now become a trash can term of sorts for fractious Pashtun tribesmen who collectively hate the foreign invaders enough to turn even traditional enemies into friends. This shifting series of alliances comes with its own internal disagreements over many issues, including religion. For example, in 2010, when the Quetta Shura sent a Muslim scholar to reprimand a band of young commanders in Paktia Province who were not following Taliban leader Mullah Omar's directives, the young men just killed him.<sup>16</sup>

In times of war when a group's future is at risk, an idealized collective identity can be reinforced by the group's very opposition to the enemy force.

Just as our conflicts are interactive, so too are our cultures. It could even be argued that one of the surest ways cultures interact and influence each other is through conflict and warfare. In times of crisis, particularly in times of war when a group's future is at risk, however, an idealized collective identity can be reinforced by the group's very opposition to the enemy force, and by extension the enemy's culture.

Because of this dynamic, once again it is important to discriminate between how people think about themselves, what they say they do, and what they actually do. When forced to choose between pragmatic compromise and hard-headed dogma, Taliban leaders will frequently opt for the former. Just consider how on a whole range of fronts, from suicide bombing to the education of girls, from narcotics cultivation and trafficking to the use of music and media operations, the Taliban have repeatedly adapted their rules to justify practical change.

Of course, they often justify such changes by reinterpreting passages from the Qur'an. Suicide bombing, for example, was once considered off-limits—not just because it was immoral, but perhaps worse, because it was considered unmanly. Nowadays, the Taliban assert that verse 2:207 of the Qur'an, as it turns out, actually supports suicide bombing.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, when the Taliban banned girls from school in the 1990s, Mullah Muttawakil served as the Taliban foreign minister. Now, his daughter attends a school in Kabul—one he himself set up.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, Taliban leaders once insisted that all narcotics were not just dangerous but also sinful, yet they were able to interpret the Qur'an in a way that permitted them to set aside religious laws—ostensibly in times of extreme hardship, such as starvation—so that today they describe themselves as the protectors of poppy farmers and indeed, the narcotics economy.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, they once banned all music but now spread their own motivational musical propaganda electronically from cell phone to cell phone via Bluetooth.<sup>20</sup> The Taliban once shunned any depiction of the human form as idolatry and smashed everything from television sets to pedestrian crosswalk signs. They infamously blew up what were apparently



threatening religious/cultural artifacts such as the ancient Buddhist statues at Bamiyan, Afghanistan. Nowadays, however, not only do Taliban leaders regularly give TV and online interviews, they also have websites, sophisticated media operations teams, and even embedded journalists.<sup>21</sup> More recently, the Taliban used the official Afghan Taliban website to advise other groups to “calm down.”<sup>22</sup> Although they did not name ISIS directly, they called on “scholars in Sham (Syria),” a clear reference to ISIS, and warned somewhat paradoxically that “Muslims also should avoid extremism in religion.”<sup>23</sup>

Not only do Taliban leaders regularly give TV and online interviews, they also have websites, sophisticated media operations teams, and even embedded journalists.

Such examples emphasize the imperative that we interpret culture cautiously and anticipate such mutations and adaptations. Culture is an arsenal of metaphors and ideas that can be skillfully used, abused, interpreted, and even “weaponized” to justify a variety of choices.

## Country, Culture, Character, and Contradiction

Do what you will, this world's a fiction and is made up of contradiction.

— William Blake<sup>24</sup>

There is a common saying in English: “He can’t see the forest for the trees.” This means that if one focuses too closely on the details of a subject (the trees), one is likely to miss the bigger picture that those details form when taken together (the forest). When it comes to predicting the behavior of members of a specific culture or state, a researcher who knows something of, say, international relations, but is not immersed in the subject’s specific cultural symbols and is unaware of the social structure, uneducated in the language, ignorant of geography, and uninformed about the ruling power structure, will have little understanding of his or her subject (cannot see the trees). A researcher trained only in the cultural details of a society, however, may be equally limited and prone to consider the specifics of a case without grasping the general principles that may be having a greater effect on a cultural group or a state’s decision making (cannot see the forest).

Culture is an important and significant component in the architecture of choice, and cultural insight can therefore certainly shed light on the context in which choices are shaped. After all, ideas are tools with which to interpret the world, and ideas about appropriate norms, values, security, land, what is worth fighting for, or the appropriate use of violence are passed down within groups. Decisions and policy choices are made by decision makers who are steeped in particular cultural biases, values, and memories.<sup>25</sup> A nation or tribe’s interests, what is “sacred,” what can be sacrificed, risked, or compromised, or even the conditions of success, are not necessarily self-evident or objectively obvious.<sup>26</sup>

Decisions and policy choices are made by decision makers who are steeped in particular cultural biases, values, and memories.

For example, the contradictory nature of risks in war or even “kinetic military actions” adds further variables to intelligence estimates. Assuming so-called rational behavior on the part of the enemy,<sup>27</sup> an intelligence analyst is supposed to predict that the opponent will avoid a very risky operation that entails high costs but uncertain benefits. The fundamental flaw in such assumptions is that they are true only in theory. In practice, what is considered a high risk in one culture may be acceptable in another. In other words, there can be little doubt that culture informs and in some significant way, can shape the priorities of a state when defining its foreign policy objectives, but culture does not exist in a

vacuum and is itself shaped by material experience. An ideological worldview is defined (and in many ways propelled) by the harsh realities of experience.

The late US Naval War College professor Michael I. Handel offered an excellent example of how a culture can develop around a state's strategic context in his assessment of the plight of Israel.<sup>28</sup> Since its founding in 1948, Israel has more than once achieved remarkable operational and tactical victories against invading Arab armies. Paradoxically, however, as Handel points out, these victories may also have served to screen Israel's considerable strategic inadequacies. His observation echoes that of political theorist Hannah Arendt, who warned in 1948, on the occasion of war in Palestine, that Israel could become

something quite other than the dream of world Jewry, Zionist and non-Zionist. The "victorious" Jews would live surrounded by an entirely hostile Arab population, secluded into ever-threatened borders, absorbed with physical self-defense to a degree that would submerge all other interests and activities. The growth of a Jewish culture would cease to be the concern of the whole people; social experiments would have to be discarded as impractical luxuries; political thought would center around military strategy.<sup>29</sup>

In a culturally multifaceted society, policy may be defined through the interaction of competing cultures and their own particular interpretations of experience.

A cultural approach informed by history may help illuminate why Israel, with a small but well-educated population and a collective memory of both recent and ancient existential crises, is overcome with a siege-like mentality—a sense of itself as having “circled the wagons”—and is overly reliant on military solutions and preemptive war, technological superiority, and an absolute sense of security.<sup>30</sup> Culture, then, can be thought of as comprising the collective living memory of historical experience and the mythology and narratives that the group develops to share and pass on that experience. In this way, a diachronic account of Israelis' personal histories, along with a synchronic understanding of Israel today as a fortress state, can in part explain the cultural context that shapes Israel's strategic security policy.

Nevertheless, when it comes to writing history, an overly deterministic culturalist approach underestimates the tangled relationship between war, politics, and culture. For instance, in a culturally multifaceted society, policy may be defined through the interaction of competing cultures and their own particular interpretations of experience, which ultimately determines how competing interests are prioritized. In multicultural polities like Iran, the United States, and others, this can result in a contradictory experience at different levels of policy making—a reality that can make any coherent and constructive international response problematic.

We may even come to see culture—and not, say, the economic and social unmooring of traditional territorial societies and identities that inevitably accompanies the uncertainties and insecurities of an increasingly globalized world—as the primary source of international conflict. But in the real world, of course, nations do not behave as culturally-chained-and-bound actors. From alliances of convenience between sixteenth-century England and Safavid Persia (for his part, Shah Abbas I “preferred the dust from the shoe soles of the lowest Christian to the highest Ottoman personage”<sup>31</sup>), to Nazi Germany's alliance with Imperial Japan, to the security cooperation between modern Shi'a Iran and Christian Orthodox Armenia (rather than Shi'a Azerbaijan), it becomes obvious

that pragmatic leaders can cheat and play musical chairs with identities. They are not necessarily trapped in their own articulated state identity, even when their foreign policy choices compete with or contradict the official rhetoric.

## The Case of Iran: Culturally Consistent, Politically Contradictory

The assumption, apparently harbored by many Americans, that the current differences between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran are due solely to the ideologies of Iran's leaders is both one-dimensional and ahistorical. Current geopolitical frictions in the Middle East date to the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the end of WWI. The end of Turkish rule left a regional power vacuum that the war's European victors and their newly urgent oil interests swiftly filled. This political, economic, and cultural semi-occupation by outside powers only deepened when the United States joined in during the Cold War, a move that perhaps inevitably put some of Iran's strategic interests in direct conflict with those of the United States.

Although the domestic policies of successive Iranian regimes may have been vastly different, there has been remarkable continuity in their search for political and economic autonomy, as well as regional preeminence. A deep understanding of Iran's geography and resources, its long history, and its rich Persian cultural roots, for example, may help critics appreciate why the Islamic Republic insists on an "absolute and inalienable right" to enrich uranium under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). According to one expert, an indefatigable commitment to independence is a core component of Iranian political culture.<sup>32</sup> If Iranian leaders regard nuclear energy as a means of assuring independence, then US and European analysts who imagine that Iran's reformist leaders will be more willing to compromise on Iran's nuclear energy than the so-called hardliners will have missed the mark. Even the reformist leaders of the Iranian Green Movement, who were fiercely critical of the Mahmoud Ahmadinejad presidency, were equally fiercely nationalistic and supported Iran's sovereign right to a complete nuclear fuel cycle.<sup>33</sup>

Pragmatic leaders are not necessarily trapped in their own articulated state identity, even when their foreign policy choices compete with or contradict the official rhetoric.

Even the reformist leaders of the Iranian Green Movement were equally fiercely nationalistic and supported Iran's sovereign right to a complete nuclear fuel cycle.

## "Neither an Islamic State nor a Republic"

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a good example, not just of the continuities but also the contradictions that may be rooted in a nation's multifaceted and complex sense of identity. The internal contradictions in Iran's conduct of both domestic and foreign policy, and in even the way the state describes itself, were familiar to the late Ayatollah Hussein-Ali Montazeri. This Ayatollah, widely recognized as the most knowledgeable senior Islamic scholar in Iran during his lifetime, openly criticized the Islamic Republic's domestic and foreign policy for more than 20 years.<sup>34</sup> In 2009, he even admonished the top officials directly when he wrote, "At least have the courage to admit this is neither an Islamic state nor a republic."<sup>35</sup> To fully grasp what Ayatollah Montazeri was driving at, we need to understand the meaning behind the seemingly straightforward words *Islamic Republic of Iran*.

First, the word *Islamic* implies a transnational identity and a global interest because it refers to a world religion that cuts across territorial boundaries and ethnicities. In this way, it transcends the interests of the Iranian nation. Furthermore, Iran's official state religion is Shi'a Islam, and some scholars have argued

that the moral authority and legitimacy of Shi'ism itself as "a religion of protest and revolt" are lost if it is ever successful politically.<sup>36</sup> This is a provocative position, given the status of Shi'ism in Iran today. Second, a state that calls itself a "republic" purports to represent the will of its own population. But this is hardly the case in Iran. Apart from rampant cronyism, nepotism, and rigged elections, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has speculated that one day the elected office of the presidency may no longer be needed.<sup>37</sup> Without representation of its people, what Khamenei is hinting at amounts to an Iran without Iranians.

Finally, perhaps Ayatollah Montazeri should have gone further and insisted that the regime drop "Iran" from the state's title as well. The name *Iran* signifies an accepted and recognizable geographical and territorial entity, replete with a people called *Iranians*, whose interests an "Iranian state" represents.<sup>38</sup> In practice, national (Iranian), cultural (primarily Persian or Azeri), and/or ideological (Islamic) goals might be promoted by the regime when they are in step with the material interests of the rulers, but such interests are commonly sacrificed when they are in conflict with regime policies. Thus, the very name of the Islamic Republic of Iran is in conflict with itself and revealing of its own competing identities. This situation is only further complicated when one considers the multi-ethnic and multicultural polity that makes up Iran.

There can be some tension and ambiguity among citizens with regard to just what it means to be Iranian. While ethnic minorities in Iran may see Iranian identity as a meta-ethnic label, extending to all members born in and/or living in the Iranian state (a concept that has historical veracity), there are those among the dominant Persian ethnicity (especially perhaps among the Persian diaspora) who view being Iranian as synonymous with being Persian and of Persian culture. The state, regardless of these ideas, strategically evokes and embodies different identities for itself depending on the circumstances. This strategy was especially obvious after the fall of the Soviet Union, when Iran's overtly Shi'a identity had little currency among the newly independent states. Iran's rulers recognized that they could utilize Iran's "Persian" identity as a source of strength in some areas (e.g., among the Farsi-speaking populations of Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) and leverage its sizable Azeri minority identity in others (e.g., Azerbaijan and other Turkic states), while Iranian history and its ancient traditions (like the New Year festival of *Nowruz*) could be invoked in general when trying to foster goodwill and cooperation across Central Asia. In attempts to broker its regional ambitions in Central Asia, Iran's former deputy foreign minister, Abbas Maleki, famously even said that Iran did not wish to become involved in "rivalry and competition" but that, "naturally," Iran had "far more deep-rooted ties with Central Asia than any other party competing for influence there."<sup>39</sup>

Iran is by no means unique in encompassing such internal contradictions, but if we are aware of both the cultural and pragmatic roots of regime decision making, we are less likely to be surprised by policies that seem highly contradictory. For example, consider how Iran's support for Hezbollah in Lebanon is typically justified by Tehran on the basis of Islamic brotherhood and shared Shi'ism. Meanwhile, the same Iranian regime maintains closer ties to Christian Orthodox Armenia than to its Shi'a neighbor Azerbaijan and was revealingly uninterested in the plight of the Farsi-speaking Tajiks during their civil war (1992–1997). To say that such choices were made because of state interests is exactly the point. The same argument could be made to explain why Iran once



considered it expedient to support Iraq's Shi'a president, Nouri al-Maliki, while the now looming threat of ISIS has apparently caused that support to vanish.

## Conclusion

Oceania was at war with Eurasia: therefore Oceania had always been at war with Eurasia.

— George Orwell, 1984 <sup>40</sup>

Given that warfare is often a celebration of group identity in the form of patriotism, it is paradoxical that there is perhaps no knowledge guild more insular and less aware of human cultural variations and interconnectedness than military and security studies. In theory, an understanding of culture is advantageous for militaries and policy makers at every level, from the strategic to the operational to the tactical. Appreciating the importance of a cultural perspective can help overcome any strong-headed ethnocentrism and foster an understanding of others' perspectives. Further, by incorporating cultural studies into its training curricula, the military shows that it is capable of reforming and transforming itself, while the larger society acknowledges the utility and morality of improving its ability to communicate and empathize with others. This willingness to adapt is especially important when operating on foreign soil, where military personnel are asked to put on various hats, from peacekeeping to security to nation-building. Under such circumstances, recognizing and mapping the maze of networks, cross-cutting relationships, power dynamics, and ethnic perspectives that influence local decision making may allow for a certain nimbleness in dealing with the possible problems at hand.

At the same time, we should not uncritically invoke culture in international relations and policy making. Although culture is an important variable, it may not always be highly predictive. A naïve consideration of culture leads to the illusion that other people are prisoners of their own culture, and that they are thus somehow always consistent—primordial and timeless. Taking a purely cultural perspective makes it easy to miss the practical, protean, and flexible nature of people everywhere. Culture is never simply a conservative reservoir for tradition and maintenance; it's also a wellspring of powerful ideas and metaphors that its members can make use of to transform society.

To avoid being caught in the amber of our own stereotypical thinking, we must account for, consider, and appreciate *contradiction* on the one hand and *change* and *continuity* on the other. Foreign policy is best understood as resulting from the interaction of competing cultures and their interpretations of experience, which provides the prism through which interests are rationalized and prioritized. In multicultural polities, this process can often result in a contradictory experience at different levels of policy making, a reality that can complicate any constructive international response. Because it is easy to mythologize stereotypes about others, our aim shouldn't be to try to erase prior prejudices and stereotypes, but rather to be in constant argument with them. This is the real value of what anthropology can bring to policy. ❖

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## NOTES

- 1 Attributed to Marx by Bennett Cerf in his column “Try and Stop Me,” *Kentucky New Era*, 9 November 1944, 3. The original quotation (“Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it *whether it exists or not*, diagnosing it incorrectly and applying the wrong *remedy*.”) apparently belongs to Sir Ernest Benn; a first known citation reportedly appears in the *Springfield (Mass.) Republican* on 27 July 1930.
- 2 The phrasing of a “Western way of warfare” was popularized by Victor Davis Hanson in *The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989). Hanson in turn was influenced by John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976). Generations of European peoples have embraced this idea of a consistent and continuant “Western way” of fighting, based on an idealized concept of the ancient Greek hoplite. I find the term and the associated concepts, along with its equally spurious “Eastern” counterpart, ahistorical and useless.
- 3 Operation Bodyguard (1944) was one of several successful operations devised by the Allies in World War II to mislead German intelligence as to the size, strength, location, and timing of a potential Allied invasion of the French coast.
- 4 See, for example, Patrick Porter, *Military Orientalism* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2009).
- 5 Ralph Peters, “Taliban from Outer Space,” *New York Post*, 3 February 2009: <http://nypost.com/2009/02/03/taliban-from-outer-space/>
- 6 David Berreby, *Us and Them: The Science of Identity* (New York: University of Chicago Press, 2008).
- 7 See Tim Benbow, *The Magic Bullet? Understanding the Revolution in Military Affairs* (London: Brassey’s UK, 2004), 80.
- 8 In his book *Writing Security*, David Campbell describes how the narrative of “the city on the hill,” a “New Eden,” or an “American Jerusalem” affected and shaped American security discourses during the Cold War. Following Campbell’s argument, the Cold War can be seen as a struggle, at least in part, over American identity: a struggle that was not context-specific and thus not dependent on the existence of a specific kind of Soviet Union. Thus, the Cold War was an important episode in the ongoing enactment and reenactment of the American identity and national character through the performances and practices of its foreign policy. David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).
- 9 Edward Said was a Christian Palestinian-American professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University. He was also a cultural critic and public intellectual who is best known for the 1978 book *Orientalism*. In this book, Said observes that the West’s condescending and assumed authoritative perceptions of North African, Middle Eastern, and Asian societies are neither “innocent” nor objective. Instead, these views are inherently political, shaped by imperialist and colonialist interests. These kinds of binary distinctions, Said notes, aren’t limited to the actual, geographic East and West, but represent a paradigm defined by orientalism wherever they’re applied. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).
- 10 Friedrich Thiemann is a secondary character in the pro-Nazi play *Schlageter* (1933), by Hanns Johst. *Hanns Johst’s Nazi Drama Schlageter*, trans. Ford B. Parkes-Perret (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1984). This quote is often misattributed to Nazi leader Hermann Göring.
- 11 David Blair, “The Americans Love Pepsi-Cola, but We Love Death,” *Telegraph*, 24 September 2001: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/1341470/The-Americans-love-Pepsi-Cola-but-we-love-death.html>
- 12 ISIS is known alternatively as ISIL—the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant—Da’esh, and the Islamic State.
- 13 Thea Traff, “Thomas Dworzak’s Taliban Glamour Shots,” *New Yorker*, 29 March 2014: <http://www.newyorker.com/culture/photo-booth/thomas-dworzaks-taliban-glamour-shots>
- 14 The Rambo series of films (begun in 1982) starring Sylvester Stallone, and The Terminator series (begun in 1984) starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, are two iconic Hollywood odes to American machismo.
- 15 Although they preach a particularly draconian version of orientalist nostalgia, the Taliban are not “medieval” in practice. If their actual behavior is compared to a medieval Afghan dynasty like the Ghaznavids, similarities such as book burning and a fondness for public hanging are found, but these are vastly outweighed by the differences: in the ancient dynasty, women and poets had a prominent role in society, people played the game of chess, and they drank alcoholic beverages. The Taliban are more accurately “barbarian.”
- 16 Scott Atran, “Turning the Taliban against Al Qaeda,” *New York Times*, 26 October 2010: [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/27/opinion/27atran.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/27/opinion/27atran.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)
- 17 The verse is translated variously: “And of the people is he *who sells himself*, seeking means to the approval of Allah. And Allah is kind to [His] servants”; or, “There are those among people who *give their lives* to seek God’s pleasure. God is Affectionate to His servants” (italics added). See the Quranic Arabic Corpus, Verse (2:207)—English Translation: <http://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=2&verse=207>
- 18 Margherita Stancati and Habib Khan Totakhil, “Taliban Take Girls Back to School,” *Wall Street Journal*, 16 January 2014: <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304049704579318592003912998>
- 19 Vartan Gregorian, “Preventing Afghanistan from Becoming a Narco-State,” *Carnegie Reporter* 6, no. 4 (Spring 2012): <http://carnegie.org/publications/carnegie-reporter/single/view/article/item/311/>
- 20 Thomas H. Johnson and Ahmad Waheed, “Analyzing Taliban *Taranas* (Chants): An Effective Afghan Propaganda Artifact,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 22, no. 1 (2011): 3–31.
- 21 See “Life among U.S. Enemies: Embedded with the Taliban,” CNN, 10 December 2010: <http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/asiapcf/12/10/taliban.refsdal.inside.look/>
- 22 Kieran Corcoran, “Now Even the Taliban Warns ISIS Islamist Rebels in Iraq to ‘Avoid Extremism’ as It Calls for a New Council of Jihadi Factions to Keep Them on the Same Page,” *Daily Mail*, 12 July 2014: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2689776/Now-Taliban-warns-ISIS-Islamist-rebels-Iraq-avoid-extremism-calls-new-council-jihadi-factions-page.html>
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 *The Poetical Works of William Blake*, ed. John Sampson (London: Oxford University Press, 1908).
- 25 See Colin S. Gray, *Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare* (London: Phoenix Press, 2005), 90–91.

- 26 Scott Atran and Jeremy Ginges, "Religious and Sacred Imperatives in Human Conflict," *Science* 336, no. 6083 (2012): 855–57. See also John Robert Ferriss, *Intelligence and Strategy: Selected Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 107.
- 27 Joseph Henrich, Steven J. Heine, and Ara Norenzayan, "Most People Are Not WEIRD," *Nature* 466, no. 29 (1 July 2010): 29; see also Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, "Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk," *Econometrica* 47, no. 2 (1979), 263–91.
- 28 Michael I. Handel, "The Evolution of Israeli Strategy: The Psychology of Insecurity and the Quest for Absolute Security" in *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States and War*, eds. Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox, and Alvin Bernstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 534–78.
- 29 Hannah Arendt, "To Save the Jewish Homeland," in *The Jewish Writings*, eds. Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 396.
- 30 Handel, "The Evolution of Israeli Strategy."
- 31 Houchang Nahavandi and Yves Bomati, *Shah Abbas, Empereur de Perse (1587–1629)* (Paris: Perrin, 1998), 114.
- 32 R.K. Ramazani, *Independence without Freedom* (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 2013). Ramazani explains, "Although Iran had never been colonized, it had enjoyed only nominal independence since the turn of the nineteenth century, when it was sucked into the whirlwind of international politics, including economic and political domination by Britain and Russia, world powers that invaded and occupied Iran in World War I, as they would again in World War II" (*ibid.*, 2).
- 33 As Harvard University's Stephen M. Walt has warned, "We should not assume that far-reaching political change in Iran would eliminate all sources of conflict between Iran and the United States (or the West). It would have little effect on the nuclear issue: Iran has been seeking nuclear energy (and possibly nuclear weapons) ever since the Shah. ... Iran was a more expansionist power under the Shah than it has been as an 'Islamic Republic,' and the Shah also supported insurgent groups in other countries when he thought it suited Iranian interests." Stephen M. Walt, "Be Careful What You Wish For: Would 'Regime Change' Help Iran?" *Foreign Policy*, 14 December 2009: [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/12/14/be\\_careful\\_what\\_you\\_wish\\_for\\_would\\_regime\\_change\\_help\\_iran](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/12/14/be_careful_what_you_wish_for_would_regime_change_help_iran)
- 34 Michael Slackman, "Cleric Wields Religion to Challenge Iran's Theocracy," *New York Times*, 21 November 2009: [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/22/world/middleeast/22ayatollah.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/22/world/middleeast/22ayatollah.html?_r=0)
- 35 Massoumeh Torfeh, "Neither Islamic nor a Republic," *Guardian*, 29 August 2009: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2009/aug/29/iran-clergy-infighting-ayatollah>
- 36 Hamid Dabashi, *Shi'ism: A Religion of Protest* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2011).
- 37 Robert F. Worth, "Iran's Power Struggle Goes beyond Personalities to the Future of the Presidency Itself," *New York Times*, 26 October 2011: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/27/world/middleeast/in-iran-rivalry-khamenei-takes-on-presidency-itself.html>
- 38 Touraj Daryaei, *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr: A Middle Persian Text on Late Antique Geography, Epic, and History* (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2002).
- 39 Abbas Maleki, "Iran," in *The New Silk Roads: Transport and Trade in Greater Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Baltimore, Md.: Silk Road Studies Program, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University, 2007): <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/publications/GCA/GCAPUB-06.pdf>
- 40 George Orwell, *1984* (1949; repr., New York: Random House, 1992).

## The Tie That Binds: Reflections on Veterans Day

*MAJ Anthony F. Heisler, US Army  
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THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER IS HOST TO THE US FEDERAL HOLIDAY called Veterans Day.<sup>1</sup> The eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month marked the official start of the armistice that brought the First World War to a close, but in 1954, Armistice Day in the United States was renamed and repurposed to recognize all veterans of US wars.<sup>2</sup> Memorial Day is another US holiday that is synonymous with military service to the nation. Although the two days are different in meaning and purpose, they are often referred to interchangeably—most often by those who do not know what the holidays represent and usually to the consternation of those who do. Beyond the literal meaning and purpose of these two days, however, I believe there is a deeper purpose that is often entirely overlooked, but that should, in fact, be accounted for above most others. These two holidays provide a very real opportunity to examine the bond between military personnel who serve the Republic and the non-military citizenry, a bond that is a privilege in the truest sense of the word and that is in need of some maintenance. To begin, it is worth clarifying the difference between Memorial Day and Veterans Day.

### Looking Back

Veterans Day is intended to be a day of recognition, whereas Memorial Day is a somber day of remembrance. Memorial Day, observed annually in late May, is the holiday with the longer tradition and grew out of a custom of decorating the graves of those who died in the US Civil War in the years following the conflict that divided the nation.<sup>3</sup> Veterans Day emerged from the day when the world marked the official end of World War I. Both holidays matured over time and grew to take on larger meanings: Memorial Day came to include the war dead from all US conflicts, while Veterans Day now recognizes not only veterans of all US wars, but all US military veterans, regardless of whether they served in peacetime or wartime.

Many Americans enjoy a day off from work on these two federal holidays. The three-day-long Memorial Day weekend in particular is often associated with travel deals and sales on appliances. It also marks the unofficial start of summer for Americans. Most of the public outreach from veterans' organizations with regard to both holidays is intended to educate citizens on the meaning of the two days: namely, that Veterans Day is a day of appreciation for the armed services, and Memorial Day is a day devoted to the memory of those in uniform who have sacrificed their lives for the nation.

These are noteworthy distinctions, and the efforts to educate citizens on the differences are important, but there is something else that is being missed here. As a veteran of the wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan, I personally knew a number of people who were killed in each of those places. I have to admit that it was thus a little disconcerting to hear someone wish me "Happy Memorial

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The three-day-long Memorial Day weekend in particular is often associated with travel deals and sales on appliances. It also marks the unofficial start of summer.



Day!” at the conclusion of a Memorial Day service this past May. This was my first Memorial Day back home in the United States in four years, and although I was not surprised at the juxtaposition of *happy* and *memorial*, having heard it countless times on television, I was still taken aback by the comment in that time and place. The distance I felt between my personal reality, which has been informed by 10 years of wartime service, and the reality of the well-intentioned, but uninformed, passerby became the initial inspiration for this essay. The uncertainty I felt when considering how to react reflected something larger than the fact that someone did not know the meaning of a holiday, but at that time, I did not understand what it was. An unexpected series of questions from a fellow officer from Europe helped me put my finger on it.

In the week following Memorial Day, a NATO colleague of mine approached me between classes at the US Naval Postgraduate School. He had a number of questions about the affinity between the US military and the American people, how it came to be, and how it is maintained. Given the disconnect I had experienced on the street days before, I was intrigued by his inquiry and observations. The purpose behind his questions was to identify ways that his own military might be able to kindle a similar relationship with the civilian citizens of his nation. He noted the welcomed presence of US military units in parades on national holidays, the regular displays of military appreciation during professional sporting events, and anything and everything to do with NASCAR—again, his observation, not mine.<sup>4</sup> My personal experience following the previous week’s Memorial Day service and the observations of my allied counterpart combined to shed light on the larger issue that I had previously been unable to identify.<sup>5</sup>

Although Veterans Day and Memorial Day are observed for specific reasons, they are purposed to a larger cause. They serve a critical function in maintaining the delicate—and absolutely essential—tether between the uniformed military personnel who serve to defend the nation and the civilian citizens who comprise the rest of the nation—the People. But the apparent disconnect between me and that passerby has given me cause to question the health and status of that relationship. On closer consideration, it further occurred to me that it is the responsibility of both parties, civilians and service members, to maintain it. Finally, my NATO colleague’s comments illuminated the fact that this essential relationship is a privilege in the truest sense of the word—not many nations enjoy these bonds to the degree that we do in the United States, if they enjoy them at all.

My NATO colleague’s comments illuminated the fact that this essential relationship is a privilege in the truest sense of the word.

Infantry company of Sherman’s veterans.



American troops walking along a road during World War I.



My father is quick to remind me that the closeness that the US military enjoys with the population today—as the NATO officer who spoke with me observed—is not the way it’s always been. He is alluding to the military’s uncertain reception at home after returning from the Vietnam War. But the delicate relationship between the military and the civilian population goes back much further than that. Since the nation’s earliest days, the civil-military relationship in the United States has been tenuous at times. James Madison, the fourth president of the United States, was an outspoken critic of having a standing professional military.<sup>6</sup> Samuel Adams, a name synonymous with early American patriotism, was equally concerned with the potential danger that a standing military posed to the state and warned that such a body “should be watched with a jealous Eye.”<sup>7</sup> There have, however, been previous high points in this relationship, as well. Take, for example, the unity of purpose shared by the military and civilians during and at the conclusion of World War II.

Conscription served to create a dense and diverse network of veterans from all walks of life connected through their service to the nation.

To a degree, the current positive state of this relationship is the response to the post-Vietnam low—a positive backlash, if you will. This upswing during the last decade of war is in part supported by tens of thousands of veterans—from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, and the periods in between—who remember very vividly the lows in civil-military relations post-Vietnam and who are now themselves civilians. With the exception of Desert Storm, the military drafted civilians into service to increase its ranks during those earlier conflicts, cutting across American social strata to build a force that was, in many ways, more socially diverse and integrated than the society that it sought to protect back home. Conscription also served to create a dense and diverse network of veterans from all walks of life connected through their service to the nation—a powerful force for civil-military integration. As these veterans pass on, however, so too will the painful lessons learned during that post-Vietnam low. And as the latent veteran support base that has played such a key role in maintaining the link between civilians and the military shrinks, so too will our access to the vivid memories that these veterans carry. Already we can see them fading slowly from our collective memory to the black-and-white pages of history books.

Looking forward, the current veterans of the all-volunteer force who reenter civilian life after their time in service are a mere fraction of those who did so during periods of conscription. Since 9/11, only 0.5 percent of the US population

Victorious Marines parade in France following the end of World War I.



Civil War veterans, Fourth of July or Decoration Day, Ortonville, Minnesota, 1880.



has served in the military.<sup>8</sup> The question this fact poses is immediately apparent: how does less than one percent of a population maintain a connection with the other 99.5 percent?<sup>9</sup> As time goes on, this question will increase in importance, as will the urgent need for an answer. At its heart, this relationship is a two-way street of trust. From the military to the civilian population, it entails a promise and commitment to support and defend the Constitution and the nation against all enemies. From the country's civilians to its military, it is an acknowledgement and understanding of the cost of misusing military power, and a commitment to support the armed forces through the power of the people's voice and vote.

My concern is that most Americans are not even thinking about the relationship between the military and the people. That point was affirmed for me personally in a small way following the Memorial Day service I referred to earlier. After 10 years of service, I venture to say that most members of the military can be equally insensitive to this bond. I know I was. Over the years, there have been a number of reasons why I brushed off thinking about the topic myself. The primary reason is that I have never had to think about it; during my time in uniform, it appeared to me that the civil-military relationship was, for the most part, great. I was the recipient of all the accolades and support that my NATO colleague noted (leaving aside NASCAR). Another reason is that I have been busy; more than a decade of conflict has left the US armed services stretched thin, and has kept servicemen and -women in a continuous cycle of combat or training for combat. There simply hasn't been a lot of time to concern myself with civil-military relations. The third reason may be the result of responsibility diffusion; I simply assumed someone else was taking care of it. To a large degree, someone was: the media have been supportive of individuals in uniform during the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan; citizens on the street often stop to thank the service members they meet; and the large body of veterans has been working tirelessly to support the troops and maintain the bond. But what happens next?

My concern is that most Americans are not even thinking about the relationship between the military and the people.

African American soldiers return home, 1917.



Veterans Day ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery, 1978.



Disabled veteran, ca. 1943.





What will change as the US military continues to draw down, a process that will further decrease the proportion of those in military service?

What will become of civil-military relations when the war in Afghanistan comes to a close, and the public face of what was once called the Global War on Terror moves to the background of our collective social consciousness? What will change as the US military continues to draw down, a process that will further decrease the proportion of those in military service to the overall population? These shifts have the potential to further decrease public attention to and awareness of both the military as an institution and the men and women in uniform. I think this point becomes of increasing concern as the number of veterans who provide the critical bridge between citizens in uniform and their civilian counterparts decreases over time.

Is this much ado about nothing? Perhaps. It is highly unlikely that the notably strong relationship between US military personnel and the rest of the United States will be damaged irreparably, but it is not impossible either—such a situation occurred in the home country of my NATO counterpart. At this time, it also appears unlikely that the media will change its generally favorable coverage of the uniformed services. During the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, there was a notable distinction in media coverage between the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines who were fighting the wars, and the policies that sent them there.<sup>10</sup> When bad things did occur, such as the Abu Ghraib prison scandal in Iraq and the Robert Bales incident in Afghanistan, the media's scrutiny focused on the individuals and chains of command involved, without vilifying everyone else serving in the war zone.<sup>11</sup> By contrast, media coverage that came out of Vietnam too often overlooked the individual soldiers, or lumped them in with the larger problems of that difficult war, and thus gave the public the impression that soldiers were part, or even a cause, of the problems.

The American military, news media, policy makers, and people learned a lot about the importance of the civil-military relationship from the Vietnam experience.

The American military, news media, policy makers, and people learned a lot about the importance of the civil-military relationship from the Vietnam experience. The new and dynamic forms of conflict emerging today, as typified by current events in Iraq and Syria, may nevertheless require learning new lessons. Difficult policy choices made in highly volatile conflicts are being complicated even further by instant, unfiltered global communications. Access to unverified stories across the internet could put the public's image of its soldiers in jeopardy once more. Finally, it is true that the nation's veterans will not vanish overnight, but the fact is that the veteran base is not likely to be infused with the large numbers that came out of the Second World War and the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam.

The point is this: the odds of a serious disconnect between the military and the rest of the country may be low, but the stakes are high.

The point is this: the odds of a serious disconnect between the military and the rest of the country may be low, but the stakes are high. Trust is what is at stake, and trust is one of the hardest things to earn but among the easiest to spend. The current supportive relationship between the US military and civilians has been hard-earned over generations. The concerns voiced by Madison and Adams illustrate the distrust of military power that existed when the United States was founded. It is easy to take the status quo for granted and assume that the current good relationship will remain positive indefinitely, but history has shown us that the civil-military relationship is like any other: to be successful, it requires the active participation of both partners and the ability of each to trust the other.

## Moving Forward

I am glad that the person who wished me a happy Memorial Day was enjoying the holiday and celebrating the freedom that I and my comrades-in-arms have



helped to protect through our service; but at the same time, it was apparent that they were not giving any thought to the sacrifices that the day commemorated. They were not holding up their end of the relationship—but the fact is, neither was I. All I managed to mutter in response as I kept walking was “Thanks, you too.”

Like any relationship, maintaining this connection between the armed services and civil society demands effort from both sides. It also takes communication—some form of dialogue. In retrospect, I should have stopped and politely reminded that well-wisher of the actual meaning of the holiday, and of the nature of the relationship between those who are protected and those who protect. That would have been holding up my end of the bargain. The thought, however, never even occurred to me, because I do not normally speak out like that. Like I said, prior to this experience, I had never really given any thought to civil-military relations here at home, let alone my responsibility in helping to maintain that relationship. Until now, I thought that simply putting on my uniform and doing my job was sufficient. I don’t know if that is the case anymore.

To be truthful, it is easier to just go about my business than it is to talk to people about what I do and why I do it. There have been times when I have avoided getting into discussions with civilians about military service because, to use a cliché, “they just don’t get it.” The list of people who don’t get it has even included some members of my family. I don’t expect my civilian counterparts to empathize with the intimate details of firefights or what it’s like to be in the middle of a battlefield. But I am concerned about their inability to grasp the bigger picture: the dynamics of the type of warfare we are engaged in today; how sound bites on the news do not capture the whole picture of war; or simply the ins and outs of serving in the military today. At times, I have found myself frustrated by people—both strangers and people I’ve known my whole life—who have formed staunch opinions from those short news clips, or who simply cannot understand what life is like for those in uniform. After talking with my colleagues about these concerns, I suspect that I am not the only one in uniform who has experienced these frustrations. What I have since come to realize, and what I want to say to my fellow service members, is that bottling up that frustration and just walking away is doing nothing to solve the problem. It is certainly doing nothing to maintain the larger relationship.

Communication, it is worth repeating, is critical to positive civil-military relations in a democracy. Dialogue between citizens who wear civilian clothes and those who put on a uniform will continue to be essential going forward. For military personnel, this dialogue may occur when you least expect it—perhaps on the street right after a Memorial Day service or a Veterans Day ceremony. The conversation may be as simple as setting the record straight on the meaning of a holiday deeply connected to your profession. It is equally important for active-duty service members and reservists to reach out and extend that dialogue to veterans, because our predecessors in uniform are the most active bridge between civilians and the armed forces. What is more, they’ve walked a mile in our shoes, and we’ll spend the rest of our lives walking in theirs.

## Closing Thoughts

Although I’ve written specifically about the United States and its military, the message of this essay is universal to all democracies that maintain armed forces for national defense. The nature of the relationship between the military and the

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If you should happen to find yourself sitting around the house on the last Monday in May or the 11th of November, it might be worth checking out a service or ceremony.

civilian citizenry is a concern shared by most countries of the world. Holidays that commemorate the service and sacrifices of a nation's military personnel offer all of that nation's citizens—those in civilian clothes and those in uniform—a rare and welcome opportunity to come together in the same time and space and perhaps, in a very small yet very meaningful way, contribute to the vital mutual commitment each makes to honor and defend the other.

For service members from other countries who find themselves in the United States on Veterans Day or Memorial Day, I invite you to attend a local service or ceremony. You will have a firsthand opportunity to peer a little deeper into an important aspect of American culture. You may also have the chance to examine the connective tissue that binds our military with our civilian population and gain a little insight into a corner of our national psyche that often goes unobserved by outsiders and even, sometimes, by ourselves.

Finally, there is something to be said about presence—about being there. I know that there is no standard duty day in the military, and when a long weekend comes, most of us hit the road without looking back. But if you should happen to find yourself sitting around the house on the last Monday in May or the 11th of November, it might be worth checking out a service or ceremony in your area. Not only is it good civics, but showing our face in the community—a smile, a handshake, a conversation—will go a long way toward maintaining the connection between the 0.5 percent and the 99.5 percent. ❖

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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## NOTES

- 1 The ideas and opinions of all participants are theirs alone and do not represent the official positions of the US Naval Postgraduate School, the US Department of Defense, the US government, or any other official entity.
- 2 Proclamation 3071, 19 Fed. Reg. 198 (12 October 1954): [http://www.va.gov/opa/vetday/docs/proclamation\\_1954.pdf](http://www.va.gov/opa/vetday/docs/proclamation_1954.pdf)
- 3 "Memorial Day History," US Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.: <http://www.va.gov/opa/speceven/memday/history.asp>
- 4 NASCAR stands for the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing. The sport, which organized in the years following World War II, is considered quintessentially American and is popularly associated with a patriotic, "heartland" ethos and a working-class demographic.
- 5 I want to thank my European colleague and brother-in-arms, who helped me put my own thoughts into context. I hope you find the results of my effort worthwhile.
- 6 James Madison, "The Federalist No. 46: The Influence of the State and Federal Governments Compared," *New York Packet*, 29 January 1788: <http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa46.htm>
- 7 "Letter to James Warren (1776)," Samuel Adams Heritage Society, n.d.: <http://www.samuel-adams-heritage.com/documents/samuel-adams-to-james-warren-1776.html>
- 8 Russell Heimlich, "Small Share of Americans in Active Military Duty," Pew Research Center, 23 May 2012: <http://www.pewresearch.org/daily-number/small-share-of-americans-in-active-military-duty/>
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Author's personal observation during 10 years of active-duty service and combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.
- 11 Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq was the site of incidents of serious prisoner abuse by US soldiers in 2003 and 2004, during the US occupation. See the New York Times archive on Abu Ghraib: [http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/iraq/abu\\_ghraib/index.html](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/iraq/abu_ghraib/index.html). In 2012, US Army Sergeant Robert Bales deliberately murdered 16 sleeping Afghan villagers in an act called one of the worst atrocities of the war. See the archive of news stories at Military.com: <http://www.military.com/topics/robert-bales>

## The “Golden Owl” Returns to Kazakhstan

THE FIFTH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL SNIPER COMPETITION, KNOWN AS Golden Owl–2014, took place in June at the Spassk Training Center near the city of Karagandy, Republic of Kazakhstan.<sup>1</sup> This event was held under the auspices of the Central Asia Forum for Sniper Arts, as part of its contribution to the global fight against terrorism. The main purpose of the Forum, which was created in 2009, is to train members of Central Asia’s security forces to become masters of marksmanship.

The first Golden Owl competition saw only three countries take part alongside Kazakhstan: Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Belarus. Every year since then, the number of participants has increased, and the meet now welcomes competitors from around the world. The 2014 event, which was organized by Kazakhstan’s Ministry of Defense (MoD RK), was larger than any of the MoD’s previous such competitions. Forty participants came to Karagandy from seven countries—the United Kingdom, Jordan, Kazakhstan, China, Pakistan, Russia, and the United States—to show off their skills and ability with sniper rifles over the course of

*MAJ Tlek Mirza and LT Ruslan Bek, Ministry of Defense, Republic of Kazakhstan*

To prepare, representatives of Kazakhstan’s Ministry of Defense had participated in marksmanship courses all over the world and brought back with them a variety of exercises.





The main requirements were not only accuracy in shooting, but also proficiency, endurance, strength, concentration, and the ability to apply camouflage and orientate in unfamiliar areas.

five days. To prepare, representatives of the MoD RK had participated in marksmanship courses all over the world and brought back with them a variety of exercises to incorporate into the Golden Owl competition.

The participating national teams fielded competitors from various military and law enforcement agencies. Kazakhstan sent three pairs from the regional commands: South, East, and West; one team comprised a sniper pair from Airborne Forces; and nine pairs came from the Special Forces of the MoD RK and other law enforcement agencies, for a total of 13 two-man teams. Russia sent two shooters from a Special Forces brigade of the Armed Forces, stationed at Novosibirsk. This year China sent two pairs from special units of the Lanzhou Military Region, while the United States sent a pair of competitors from the 2nd Special Forces Brigade of the US Central Command. The United Kingdom's armed forces were represented by an intelligence unit of the 160th Infantry Brigade. The representatives of Jordan and Pakistan were counterterrorism personnel from the various law enforcement agencies of their respective countries.

Winners were determined in two categories—general and international. The general category is for all teams; the international category is for one team from each country. Some tests were for individuals, but the final score for such tests combined the results for both shooters on a team. To ensure that the judging was fair and transparent, the main judge was Major Rukhi Bulgee from the Armed Forces of the Republic of Turkey, which had no participants. The judge also had to deal with any disputes or concerns that arose during the competition.

Major Bulgee noted, “The fact that I am here is giving us an opportunity to look at the real results of the competitors. Attendance at such events by representatives from a neutral side is very important. There is no chance for cheating.”

The participants had to demonstrate their expertise and marksmanship in 16 exercises during five days, in which the main requirements were not only accuracy in shooting, but also proficiency, endurance, strength, concentration, and the ability to apply camouflage and orientate in unfamiliar areas without any modern navigation technology. The exercises included proficiency in shooting at a target at unknown distance, shooting at moving targets, shooting after running over a long distance on the field, shooting from a concealed position, and so on. The task in round one, for example, was to push a big 200 kg tank for 20 m; the second round required competitors to carry a small





20 kg tank for 30 m, then climb a 1.5 m fence, crawl a short distance through a tunnel, and finally shoot at a moving target.

The weather in Karagandy can change several times during the course of a single day, which complicated things even more for the participants. Some shot in calm weather, while others would have to adjust for a constantly shifting, gusty wind. The second day of competition was held under a steady rain and the sound of thunder. High humidity then gave way to burning heat and occasional windblown sand. “It is very cold here in the morning, but in the middle of day it is hot,” Captain Abid Zaman of Pakistan said of the ever-changing weather conditions. “Such weather is practically impossible to encounter in my country. So if my soldiers adapt and learn to fire in such circumstances, this means we have become stronger. This is an invaluable experience.”

Some shot in calm weather, while others would have to adjust for a constantly shifting, gusty wind.

To ensure that the participants would be comfortable with their weapons, the MoD RK allowed each country to bring its own weapons to the competition. Because of certain customs rules, policies, and other issues, however, not all of the participating countries were able to do so. The Chinese sniper pairs used rifles of their own making, which had technical characteristics that were much better than the weapons of some other participants. The Pakistani team brought a sniper rifle made in Great Britain, called the Accuracy International L96A1; ironically, however, the UK team arrived without their own weapons. The shooters who needed guns were issued Sig Sauer SSG 3000 rifles by Kazakhstan’s MoD. As Jordanian Colonel Wael Al Numan Esayd Davavneh remarked, “Using this type of rifle added to the experience. It was the first time we have used the Sig Sauer, so it was another challenge for us. Being in these different climatic conditions and using a new weapon are going to make us even stronger. We have improved because of the experience, and this is why we came here.”

The most difficult stage of the exercises, according to participants, was an obstacle course and 5 km run that included orientation in the field as well as a camouflage component. In this exercise, which took place at night, participants had not only to find the perfect place to set up a concealed fire position, but also to endure harsh weather conditions: the night was cold, rainy, and windy. (Some participants even drank a little brandy to warm up.) The sniper duel exercise, which took place at the shooting range on the final day of competition, was the most decisive. Teams shot by pairs, and every pair had three targets: one small plate and two big poppers. The pair



“Being in these different climatic conditions and using a new weapon are going to make us even stronger. We have improved because of the experience.”

whose popper fell first was the winner. Every sniper pair went up against each of the other pairs once, and each of the duels offered a spectacular show of marksmanship. In some of the matches between international teams, determining the winners was very difficult because the time difference between shots was within a few tenths of a second.

At the end of the first day of competition, it was already obvious that the main rivalry would be between Kazakhstan's own teams. The overall prizes were won by the Special Forces teams of the MoD RK and other Kazakhstani law enforcement agencies. First place went to a pair from the Special Forces of the MoD RK Main Intelligence Agency; the team from the National Security Committee “Arystan” service (for counterterrorism) was awarded the silver medals; and by a small margin, third place went to the RK State Security Service, which is in charge of security for state officials. In the international competition, first place went by a wide margin to a pair of snipers from the Main Intelligence Agency of the MoD RK, who worked the most harmoniously of any pair throughout the competition. Second place went to a pair of marksmen from China. Chinese shooters are among the best in the world, as all the competitors saw once again. The bronze medals went to representatives of the United Kingdom.

“We are quite satisfied with second place. All of the opponents were strong, and the weather was very unpredictable,” noted Lieutenant Zhou Jian of the Chinese Liberation Army team. “But this is not the limit. The next time we will prepare better, and we will fight for the medals of the highest standard.”

US Staff Sergeant Courtney Daniels in turn noted that he was impressed by the variety of individual exercises, which he had never encountered before. “Besides the weather and the weapons, we met totally new exercises. Now we know what we will need to practice for in the near future, and I would like to say thank you very much for these competitions.”

The Russian team didn't find anything unexpected in this competition; nevertheless, the members were not satisfied by their results. “There is nothing new for us here, but we wish we could do better. We will tell our guys to pay attention and prepare much better for the next competition,” said Sergeant Vladimir Saliy of the Russian Army.

To sum up, it is worth noting that the Golden Owl competition is only in its infancy. In the future, the MoD





RK is planning to increase the number of participants. Observers of the 2014 competition from Armenia and India have already expressed their desires to field national sniper teams for the next Golden Owl in 2016. (In 2015, the MoD RK will host a similar competition for Special Forces groups.) The planners hope that expansion of the event will enable it to become a platform for counterterrorism professionals to find a common language in the fight against global terrorism and that the Sniper Art Forum of Central Asia will transform into a World Forum for Sniper Arts. ❖

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#### NOTES

1 Karagandy lies about 200 km southeast from the capital city of Astana, on the Kazakh steppe.

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## THE CTAP INTERVIEW

### LTC Chok Bahadur Dhakal, Nepalese Army

*Interviewed by Amina Kator-Mubarez and Elizabeth Skinner, US Naval Postgraduate School*

THIS INTERVIEW IS TAKEN FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE COMBATING Terrorism Archive Project (CTAP).<sup>1</sup> On 28 March 2014, Lieutenant Colonel Chok Dhakal of the Nepalese Army spoke with Amina Kator-Mubarez and Elizabeth Skinner about his experiences during Nepal's recent civil war (1998–2008) and the country's subsequent transition from a monarchy to a republic.<sup>2</sup> At the time of the interview, LTC Dhakal was completing his master's degree in National Security studies at the US Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in Monterey, California.

**AMINA KATOR-MUBAREZ:** Thank you for sitting down to talk with us. Can you start by giving us some background on your experience as a commander during the Maoist insurgency?

**CHOK BADAHUR DHAKAL:** To begin, I have nearly 25 years of experience in the Nepalese Army, rising from the rank of 2nd lieutenant to my present rank of lieutenant colonel. So I have a range of experience working as a staff officer, instructor, and commander. I have participated in several United Nations peace-keeping missions, and I have done various kinds of military training both within and outside Nepal. I am currently here at NPS studying in the master's program. Regarding my command experience, from 2001 to 2002 I was deployed in the southern part of my country to fight against the Maoist insurgency. At that time, the insurgency was at its peak, and the Maoists were everywhere in the country. We were having a hard time just providing security to the population and assuring free access to public facilities. At the same time, we were also fighting against the Maoists nationwide. Filling the policing role on the one hand and doing military operations on the other hand was very challenging.

From my experience as a commander, I would say you need to think about how to use your troops in a combat role, and simultaneously in a supporting role to help the local population. It was very difficult for us junior commanders to decide how to do it. The troops sometimes needed to go and fight against the insurgents, and then those same troops, using the same weapons, and with the same training and everything, now had to perform these different roles. Fighting the insurgent combatants, and also serving the people and doing the job of policing, are completely different things.

**KATOR-MUBAREZ:** Did you have a lot of support from the civilian population, or was it difficult? Did you pursue propaganda campaigns to get their support?

**DHAKAL:** This is a very good question. Yes, we did a lot to support the civilian population, but it was only from the tactical level, I would say. At the national level we were having political troubles, and there was not a stable government running the country. But as we deployed on the ground, we had to do something to address the people's needs as well. So we conducted military-civic action side

Filling the policing role on the one hand and doing military operations on the other hand was very challenging.



by side. We ran the rural hospitals; we went to the schools to build some physical infrastructure, for example, toilets and some libraries; we also deployed to protect and escort public convoys—that was a different and unique part of my job.

What we know is that if you support local people, that is a good way for you to get firsthand information and win support—doing your part and getting information in return, and using this same information to help your combat elements fight against the Maoists. That was the good part, you know, to have the local support. They support you, not in terms of operational requirements, but in terms of information requirements. That was good for effective military operations.

If you can't gain popular support, then the insurgents will enjoy the popular support, and they will be much more effective against the security forces. So you need to think about the population first before going into combat in a counter-insurgency campaign. From my experience, what happened in many places in my country was that the local population supported the insurgents. The people didn't give information, didn't give support, didn't even speak with the national forces; they supported the insurgency. That made it hard for the state forces to fight against the insurgency, because the army did not have reliable information about the population and wasn't getting information from them. You need information, because they—terrorists or insurgents, however you define them—normally look like civilians. They don't have any specific uniform, they don't carry a weapon openly. They live with the population, they do everything within the population, so it is very hard for the security elements to recognize an individual as an insurgent or terrorist.

**KATOR-MUBAREZ:** Was it difficult for your military officers or soldiers to shift mindsets from conducting combat operations to focusing on the civilians, working with the civilian population? You said that you were running these hospitals and other facilities to try to get support from the civilian population. Did your soldiers have a hard time transitioning from fighting insurgents to working with civilians? Or were there two separate military groups doing the two missions: one dealing primarily with the insurgency and one dealing with the civilian population?

**DHAKAL:** As far as resources are concerned, the military normally is given the resources required for military operations, not for the other, population-focused efforts. You need different types of resources and different types of skills—different technical skills. So it was very hard to make it happen, but what we normally did was to use the resources we had for both roles. We had to have security units providing security to our own troops, the ones who were conducting the population-centric efforts. So this was our first problem.

Number two was about the insurgents' linkage with the population. If you openly go and do something in a community, there is a danger of being targeted by the insurgents because they are already there. It is very difficult to know who is there before you. The insurgents are watching you all the time: who is doing what, which commander is there with his staff. It was a very, very difficult part of military or police work. Even during a military operation, if the insurgents were few in number, they could come and pretend to support you along with the real villagers. They could learn more about you: what weapon you are carrying, what your rank is, and how many troops you have. They can get very close and start talking with you, and they like to try to win you over psychologically by helping you, providing you with some resources, but you don't know who they are.

If you support local people, that is a good way for you to get firsthand information and win support—doing your part and getting information in return.

The insurgents are watching you all the time: who is doing what, which commander is there with his staff. It was a very, very difficult part of military or police work.

We didn't know if a person was an innocent civilian or a terrorist insurgent, but they knew very well where we were coming from, what weapons we were bringing.

Later the insurgents will target you. They now know you very well, they know your address and information regarding your family. They can go to the family and threaten them. This happened in my country. They would get all the information about the troops and then make threatening calls to the families. Like, if you don't stop sending your son to the military, we will come and kidnap you. We will even kill you. So this made it very difficult for us to work with the population and remain with the population for a very long time. It was very difficult for us to get information regarding the Maoists—we didn't know if a person was an innocent civilian or a terrorist insurgent, but they knew very well where we were coming from, what weapons we were bringing, what our intention was, what we looked like, and how we dealt with the population. If we were doing some population-centric work and giving out information as part of that work, it could become very problematic to then launch an effective combat operation in that same area.

**ELIZABETH SKINNER:** As you were preparing to go into the hot part of the war, do you feel like you and your troops had the training you needed to conduct guerilla warfare among the civilian population? Or did you have to go in with what you had and think on your feet?

**DHAKAL:** It is a very practical question. I would like to tell you what in fact happened. Initially, the government mobilized the police force, and they fought against the insurgency for five years. The situation went out of control, the police couldn't control the Maoist insurgency, and the government decided to mobilize the military, the Nepalese Army. We had enough time to train and get resources, but you know, getting resources is not easy. Nepal was having political problems at the same time, with the political transition from monarchical rule to democracy. So political stability was the question. We were also having problems with the economic conditions because the Maoists were conducting physical attacks on industry, against the people who were running the businesses. The country was not in a position to provide the appropriate level of security to the industrial sector. From my perspective I would say we had enough time, but the real problem was resources. We lacked the resources, so we were not able to address the people's desperation. They wanted many things to be done by the security forces. They wanted to have a good environment to run their schools, they wanted to have a good environment to continue their businesses, but the problem was that the security forces did not have enough resources or enough numbers at the time to tackle the situation.

**SKINNER:** In the period right before the assassinations, the fighting was very heavy.<sup>3</sup> Your forces were under a lot of pressure in the mountainous areas. There were reports that civilians were taking a beating as the two forces were coming at each other in the villages. Do you think there was training that would have helped you and your troops handle that kind of situation better when you were in hot combat around the villages? Were there things you think could have been done better on the army's side?

**DHAKAL:** Yes. There is always space for improvement, everywhere, for all troops. In the beginning, when we deployed against the Maoist insurgency, there was a problem of information sharing, not having the correct information because we lacked reliable sources to get information. We had to depend on captured insurgents or some local villagers to provide us with information. Maybe these people have a problem with each other, so somebody tells us, "He is a Maoist," and other people say, "These people are insurgents, these people are not supporting you." So when you have a very short time to deploy, when you

The real problem was resources. We lacked the resources, so we were not able to address the people's desperation.

go against the insurgents in populated areas like the villages or similar areas, you cannot just rely on someone to have correct and valuable information. For that reason, yes, I would admit that there was mishandling of the civilian population from both sides: not only from the insurgent side, but from the army's side as well. But later, the army started providing training in human rights, on how to win the hearts and minds of the people, how to deal with the population, and what information to expect from the population. After getting this training, and in a little time—say, after 2002—I think the achievement of the army was great.

Without having information it is like you are walking in complete darkness. You can go and use your force, but without any information you can't do anything effectively. The insurgents were in a better position because they knew where the opposition political parties were, where the leaders were, and how those people supported the government and the security forces. But from the military or police perspective it was very difficult to say, this place will be the target, or this place will be left for a security operation. It was very difficult to decide where we should go, what we should do, what was the main track, or what was the target there. As a commander it was very demanding to make decisions for the troops on the ground.

**KATOR-MUBAREZ:** What do you feel is the current situation now? Do you think that the rebel groups are under control, or do they still pose a significant threat?

**DHAKAL:** I think it is a very good story. The insurgency ended in 2006, and it was ended through a negotiated political settlement. It was a group decision that ended the war peacefully. Now the rebel force is a participant in politics. They became part of the government and had a prime minister from 2008 to 2009. They are the largest political party in Nepalese politics. So this is a very good part they play. They also did a lot to change Nepalese politics. Nepal, you know, was a Hindu kingdom, constitutionally ruled by the king. Now Nepal is very much a secular country. We have a republican government that is run by the president. I would say that in the political area, that was a very good change.

Nepal has many different ethnic groups, different minorities. Going back a long time, these groups were marginalized by the state. Now these people have started demanding their rights, expressing their grievances. That is a good part the Maoists are playing in the country, but the problem is that now we are in the process of drafting a constitution. We need to have a new constitution, but the political parties are divided. One is very much democratic, and the other is very much authoritarian, I would say. The rebel force is now the major political party—I can't say rebels any more, right? The Maoist party has its own interests, and the other democratic parties have their own interests, which lead to much contradiction. This has made it difficult to create a new constitution. The political parties are still having problems creating a stable government that has a long-term strategy for national concerns like the economy, relations with other countries, and security policies. There are many things to be decided, so not having the constitution written on time doesn't help ensure lasting peace. But, after 10 years of armed conflict, it is better to take more time to create a stable, long-lasting constitution that will give the country security, peace, and stability in the long run.

**SKINNER:** What has the Nepalese Army had to do to integrate former insurgents? Has there been a process of bringing in fighters and integrating them into the service? Are there many Communists coming into the army and if so, how has that process gone?

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The integration is already completed. The Nepalese Army now includes former Maoist combatants.

Integration of the armed forces was one of the provisions of the negotiated political settlement, which has made the army a more inclusive national force.

**DHAKAL:** That is a very good question to answer now because the integration is already completed. The Nepalese Army now includes former Maoist combatants. They have finished their training and joined the army's ranks. There was a political decision and strong commitment to make that happen, and the former combatants now rank from soldier to colonel as part of the Nepalese Army. I don't think we had any problem integrating them into the force. The former insurgent fighters did well in training, and we have good relations with them. The only problem is political, because the Communists were fighting for the rights of the people, and we were fighting to safeguard the rights of the people. So the problem was that the political objective was different. The insurgency wasn't simply a fight between the guerrilla fighters and the state security forces, it was a fight between political elites, political ideologies. On the one hand, the government was fighting to safeguard the population and defeat the insurgency in accordance with the existing constitution, under which Nepal was a multi-party, democratic monarchy. On the other hand, the Maoists were fighting, with much popular support, to destroy the established social, political, and economic structures and establish Nepal as a socialist people's republic. Integration of the armed forces was one of the provisions of the negotiated political settlement, which has made the army a more inclusive national force. It has members from all the different ethnic groups: the people from the south, the north, the center—all over. So this is a good part of the story.

**SKINNER:** So you feel like that process has gone successfully?

**DHAKAL:** It has, I would say. I don't think there is any problem left within the military. The military and political leadership is happy to have solved the problem peacefully. If the political problems are solved, I don't think there will be any problem within the military. I know the military made a considerable contribution to settling this issue. The political leaders prepared the organization, prepared the way to integrate, planned how to make things go smoothly. So I think the contribution of the military in this regard was great.

**KATOR-MUBAREZ:** What would you say has been your most memorable experience as a military commander? Something that stands out for you.

**DHAKAL:** I deployed with the UN mission to Lebanon (UNIFIL) in 2000 and 2001 as an information officer in UNIFIL HQ. At that time there was a problem between Israel and Hezbollah. You know, I saw the same thing in my country that Hezbollah was doing: using conventional weapons such as missiles against the regular armed forces. The difference is that Hezbollah was operating from one country against another country and did not enjoy popular support among the population from where it was operating. Local people consider Hezbollah to be a loyal supporter of the Palestinian cause, not a terrorist group, but outsiders call its members terrorists. It can be very difficult sometimes to define who is or is not a terrorist, so you need to have a clear-cut definition of what is a terrorist. In my country, the state considered the Maoists to be terrorists and mobilized its power to defeat them, but the majority of the people supported the Maoists as a group that was fighting for the people's rights and future. Let me give another example. Some people still say the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka were freedom fighters, fighting for independence, but from the government side, they were terrorists. In the beginning, we also called the Maoists terrorists, and there was an anti-terrorist act implemented by the government. The United States and India also labeled the Maoists as a terrorist organization.



Later, however, the Maoists became a major player in the national politics of Nepal. As a junior leader, how do you differentiate between a terrorist and an insurgent when they are doing similar things for different causes? Thus it is not easy sometimes to define what are terrorist acts and what is guerilla warfare, and decide how to deal with each. This is my experience both from within my country and from outside.

It is not easy sometimes to define what are terrorist acts and what is guerilla warfare, and decide how to deal with each.

**KATOR-MUBAREZ:** You mentioned challenges that the Nepalese military had. What do you think are some areas of improvement that the Nepalese Army could try to initiate or work on?

**DHAKAL:** That is always there, you know.

**KATOR-MUBAREZ:** Is it a logistical issue, or an issue of training?

**DHAKAL:** I would say it is an issue of strategy, of the defense policy and military doctrine. Before the civil war, the army was very conventionally trained because we thought we didn't have to do anything different on the domestic front. When we deployed our force against the rebels within the country, it was the first experience we had with this kind of warfare. So we were not well trained, not resourced, and not very well focused to get information regarding the domestic situation. To have a better result in the future, I think we need to have more focus on the unconventional part. Or else we need to have some separate unit to deal specifically with the internal problems. We still have the conventional type of force: battalion and brigades with conventional weapons. If some day we need to fight against the insurgents again, I think it would be better to have different, insurgency-ready military units, and experts to deal with the requirements and aspirations of the local populations. If you train your military in a conventional way and then fight in an unconventional battle, there will be problems. I think we need to have some different units trained for a counterinsurgency environment, and they need to have different resources to tackle the requirements of the local areas. It is very difficult to adjust from seeing things in the conventional way to seeing them in the unconventional way. So training has to be superior, and the main part is the issue of human rights. The people's rights are always an important issue, so we need to think about them more from the beginning. We didn't have that much detailed training about human rights, or training about the population's concerns during the insurgency. Now we have started, I think, to make it better, and we must continue so we will have better results in the future.

We need to have some different units trained for a counterinsurgency environment, and they need to have different resources to tackle the requirements of the local areas.

**SKINNER:** It sounds like you're talking about developing something like Special Operations forces. Are you getting any help to do that from the United States? Is that a process that is being undertaken, or is it still being talked about?

**DHAKAL:** Yes, Nepal is, you could say, politically in transition, but economically not much. We cannot sustain a big army. We need to have external assistance to develop a specialized unit to deal with internal security problems. During insurgency, we received wide-ranging support from friendly countries such as the United States, the UK, India, and China. As for the special security units, the United States helped us to establish, train, and equip our Special Forces units, such as a Ranger battalion that was stood up during the insurgency. It was a great help, and US assistance has continued even post-conflict. We want this to continue because we want to have an army that is better trained, more skilled, and more professional. To have this, we need to have exposure. I am here at NPS

Nepal is, you could say, politically in transition, but economically not much. We cannot sustain a big army. We need to have external assistance.

Being a military man, you have to be ready not only for fighting, but also for dealing with other issues as well. In a period of conflict, don't only think about using your weapon.

getting my master's degree because of US military assistance. This kind of assistance plays a great role, not only at the individual level, but also at the organizational level. I now can contribute something to my country in a different way. India and China are also helping a lot because, you know, we are sandwiched in between India and China. We have good relations and have been getting good support from them, both during the conflict and in the post-conflict environment as well.

**KATOR-MUBAREZ:** Shifting gears a little bit, how has your experience at NPS been? What do you think you will take back with you, since this is your last quarter?

**DHAKAL:** I had the great opportunity to earn master's degrees in two different subjects in my country. You know, the academic process here is very different and it's tough, but it gives you a world class education. It has also kept me busy. It is very good: good exposure, good experience, and good knowledge. We have the opportunity here to learn more about the world, whatever subject or elective we choose. It has been challenging—very busy and difficult to get free time with my family, but it has been good. I really enjoyed this experience.

**KATOR-MUBAREZ:** Are there any last remarks you would like to say or anything else you would like to add?

**DHAKAL:** Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to come here and say something about my experience. What I want to say is that, being a military man, you have to be ready not only for fighting, but also for dealing with other issues as well. In a period of conflict, don't only think about using your weapon. Think about the people where you are living, and think about their problems before using your weapon. Try to find some solution to address their problems, address their grievances. We cannot operate in isolation. We are part of the civilian society. Again, I would like to thank you so much for providing me this forum to speak. ❖

## ABOUT THE INTERVIEWERS

**Amina Kator-Mubarez** is a CTAP coordinator, research assistant, and indispensable member of the Global ECCO project.

**Elizabeth Skinner** is the managing editor of the Combating Terrorism Exchange and has harbored a keen interest in Nepal's development for many years.

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## NOTES

- 1 The Combating Terrorism Archive Project aims to collect and archive knowledge on strategy, operations, and tactics used by military and other security personnel from around the world in the twenty-first-century fight against global terrorism. Collectively, the individual interviews that CTAP conducts will create an oral history archive of knowledge and experience in counterterrorism for the benefit of the CT community now and in the future.
- 2 This interview was edited for length and clarity. Every effort was made to ensure that the meaning and intention of the participants were not altered in any way. The ideas and opinions of all participants are theirs alone and

do not represent the official positions of the US Naval Postgraduate School, the US Department of Defense, the US government, or any other official entity.

- 3 On 1 June 2001, Nepal's Crown Prince Dipendra massacred his father and mother, the king and queen, along with his brother and sister and four other family members, in a sudden rampage that remains only partially explained. Dipendra shot himself afterward and died three days later. His uncle, the dead king's younger brother Gyanendra, was crowned king but was deposed by popular demand in 2008, at which time Nepal became a parliamentary republic.

## ETHICS AND INSIGHTS

## A Line in the Sand

LATELY I HAVE BEEN THINKING ABOUT EVIL—NOT JUST ANY EVIL, BUT the truly horrible acts that some people are capable of, the evil that manifests in individuals who delight in taking life, who draw sadistic pleasure from destroying lives, or who are profoundly amoral and feel no regard for the suffering, pain, and emotional devastation they cause others. Most of us, fortunately, will never meet the kinds of sadists and psychopaths who make the cheating salesman, the unethical commander, or the rapacious venture capitalist seem mild by comparison. I've been thinking, moreover, about the moral dilemma that arises when we try to deal with evil people through less than commensurately evil means.

*George Lober,  
US Naval Postgraduate School*

Foremost in my thoughts is Canadian Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire (now retired), who served in 1994 as Force Commander for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR).<sup>1</sup> In 1994, while UNAMIR was monitoring a border dispute between Rwanda and Uganda, Rwanda's Hutu majority population suddenly turned against their Tutsi neighbors with a savagery of bloodletting unparalleled outside of warfare. At one point in his memoir about Rwanda, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, Dallaire describes an encounter with the individuals who were directing the genocide.<sup>2</sup> Dallaire had requested the meeting himself, under the pretense of wanting to discuss "security," while secretly hoping to also arrange for the safe transfer of refugees from areas under Hutu control. He feared that if he could not negotiate such transfers, he would lose any further opportunity to prevent the deaths of Tutsis and other innocents still trapped inside the Hutus' territories. At the same time, he was struggling with the mounting realities of the genocide: the roadside piles of dismembered corpses; evidence of sadistic, mutilating rapes and murders; and the ongoing, relentless slaughter of Tutsis and opposing Hutus of every age—all being committed under the direction of the very men with whom he had asked to meet.

I've been thinking about the moral dilemma that arises when we try to deal with evil people through less than commensurately evil means.

These men, Dallaire offers, had not been regarded as security threats by UNAMIR before the killings began. They'd been seen as little more than "gang leaders, punks, [and] criminals."<sup>3</sup> Now they were responsible for overseeing the butchering of thousands. Knowing that fact, and fearing his possible urge to kill them on the spot, Dallaire removed the bullets from his pistol before entering the building where the meeting was to occur. As he began shaking hands with each man, he noticed that the arm and chest of one of the leaders were spattered with dried blood, presumably the blood of one or more Tutsis the leader himself had recently hacked to death with a machete. At that moment, it came home to Dallaire that he was shaking hands with the very individuals who not only acknowledged directing the massacre but were also participating in it. Yet even so, he sat down with them and began to negotiate for the possibility of transferring refugees safely to his control.

Fearing his possible urge to kill them on the spot, Dallaire removed the bullets from his pistol before entering the building.

Years later, Dallaire questioned whether, when confronted face to face with that personification of Evil, he should have kept his pistol loaded and killed those men.

Years later, still haunted by the butchery he had witnessed, Dallaire questioned whether, when confronted face to face with that personification of Evil, he should have kept his pistol loaded and killed those men.

It's an interesting question, isn't it? Setting aside the likely tactical and strategic factors that may have played into Dallaire's decision—after all, his remaining international force was inexperienced, outnumbered, and outgunned (many members of his force arrived in Rwanda weaponless), and his overarching goal at that time was to find a way to rescue as many of the refugees as possible—one might still wonder whether he should have pulled the trigger. The men he shook hands with were, by his own description, génocidaires and personifications of pure Evil. The notorious Interahamwe militia and other militias they controlled would go on to slaughter thousands more innocent men, women, and children. It's possible some of those lives could have been saved if Dallaire had broken with his own professional and moral ethics and killed the leaders when he had the chance, instead of negotiating with them. Even as he was leaving the meeting, Dallaire acknowledges, it was a question that ripped his stomach apart.

Without question, there are many reasons why Dallaire was justified in not shooting those men, but his decision demands that we ask how we would judge him morally if he had. Most estimates place the number of those killed in the

attempted genocide at around 800,000, and there's no doubt the men seated before him were happily directing the savagery as it took place. But then there is also the annoying fact that Dallaire had no legal authority under the UNAMIR mission to unilaterally engage the Interahamwe leaders with force. If he chose to kill them, would our moral assessment of that decision depend on the consequences? If the genocide had faltered as a result of being leaderless, even briefly, and if lives were saved, would we hold his decision in an approving moral light? Or would we still regard it as murder?

Let me quickly offer a second example of what I'm pondering. Over the last 13 years, some of the officers I teach have struggled with a similar moral dilemma. They have, on occasion, risked their lives and the lives of their subordinates to capture truly evil, sadistic individuals and turn those individuals over to host-nation judicial systems, only to learn later that those evildoers had been released back into society. Sometimes the killers were released because of corruption within the judicial system, sometimes because of flawed judicial policies and processes, but too often the result was that my students and their subordinates had to risk their lives to capture the same evil individuals again ... and again. As a consequence of this frustrating pattern, these officers adopted a moral cynicism that led them to question openly whether it wouldn't actually be more moral to summarily execute such individuals than to permit them to continue to take innocent lives and wreak terror on a society because of a flawed judicial

Roméo Dallaire, 1994





system. Essentially, they questioned whether the moral code, as prescribed by a society or a military organization, shouldn't bend on rare occasion, to meet the extreme circumstances of dealing with the truly diabolical.

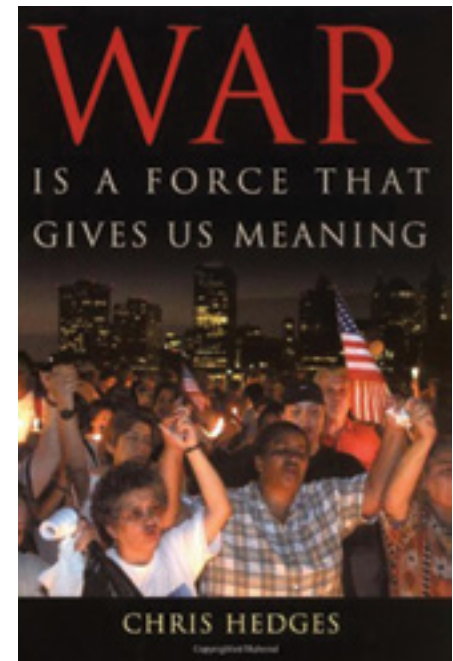
Whenever I'm asked that question, and I'm asked it often, I recall the writings of war correspondent Christopher Hedges, who believes that war is an addictive poison for mankind. Yet in *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, he writes that "the poison that is war does not free us from ethical responsibility. There are times when we must take this poison, just as a person with cancer accepts chemotherapy to live."<sup>4</sup> Hedges is asserting that despite war's horrible effects, there are occasions when an ethical responsibility demands that a moral nation engage in war so as to counter an even greater threat or evil, just as a cancer patient consents to engage in debilitating chemotherapy to counter the life-threatening effects of the disease. But Hedges then goes further by offering, "There are times when the force wielded by one immoral faction must be countered by a faction that, while never moral, is perhaps less immoral."<sup>5</sup> In the world of Chris Hedges, no faction that engages in war is ever moral, but some factions are less immoral than others, and there unquestionably are times when the truly immoral must be countered.

I think of Hedges's comments in the contexts of both my students' questions and Roméo Dallaire's dilemma. If, despite Hedges's personal detestation of war and the brutality it unleashes, he is, in fact, speaking a truth regarding the macro level of war and the moral responsibility to engage in it when circumstances demand, then is it not possible that the same moral responsibility exists at the micro level? Can there, in fact, be occasions when the suffering inflicted by the immoral actions of one individual must be countered by an action that, while never moral, is perhaps less immoral?

Even as I write those words, I admit that they make me uncomfortable. I realize their implications for my personal moral framework, the introspection and reexamination they now demand. I realize the threat such questions pose to my obdurate position regarding the role of the rule of law in society and my personal reverence for human life. I also am aware, however, of my willingness to accept what I'd like to think are well-thought-through, ethical exceptions to both those cornerstones of my moral being. Am I willing to consider another: the very personal and immediate dilemma faced by my students?

I think I have a lot of work to do to honestly answer my students. I think I need to recognize that if I truly revere human life, and if a social or judicial or institutional system and its policies fail to stop the destruction of that life, I have an ethical dilemma. If the terrorists and killers my students capture are repeatedly released to kill and terrorize again, I may be at that uncomfortable ethical crossroads where consequences intersect with principle. And for me, the way to go isn't clear.

I realize, of course, that my words may elicit a wave of protestations and concerns over what may be perceived as advocacy of vigilantism and the dangers of setting an uncontrollable precedent. Surely some will counter with the historic objection, "Where do you draw the line?" To each of those concerns I respond that I'm not advocating vigilantism in the least; I understand the importance of



Can there be occasions when the suffering inflicted by the immoral actions of one individual must be countered by an action that, while never moral, is perhaps less immoral?

If I truly revere human life, and if a social or judicial or institutional system and its policies fail to stop the destruction of that life, I have an ethical dilemma.

precedence but reject the fallacy that exceptions can't exist. Most importantly, I sincerely don't know where we should draw the line between the truly Evil with a capital E, such as those blood-spattered men in Rwanda, and the lesser, but still rapacious and lethal, predators of humanity. I don't know. But I am willing to give the question serious consideration. I invite you, if you're willing, to do so as well. ❖

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**George Lober** guides US and international military students through the tricky terrain of ethics and critical thinking at the US Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California.

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## NOTES

- 1 UNAMIR forces under Dallaire's command were initially sent to Rwanda in 1993 to monitor the resolution of a border dispute between Uganda and Rwanda. In April 1994, after the presidents of Uganda and Burundi died in a plane crash under suspicious circumstances, ethnic Hutus began slaughtering Rwanda's ethnic Tutsis in a genocide of horrific proportions. The weapon of choice was the machete. Dallaire made desperate calls for UN members to support the mission, but UNAMIR could not field the mandated number of troops or marshal the needed resources to intervene. Despite the efforts of people like Dallaire, the UNAMIR mission was a complete failure, due primarily to international indifference. See "Rwanda—UNAMIR Background," United Nations, n.d.: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamirS.htm>
- 2 Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2003), 345–47.
- 3 Ibid., 346.
- 4 Chris Hedges, *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002), 16.
- 5 Ibid.



## THE WRITTEN WORD

### *Militant Groups in South Asia*

A TRAGEDY IS A TRAGEDY. WORDS ARE NO COMPENSATION FOR THE pain inflicted by terrorist bullets. Time can gradually offer some healing touch, however, and the reopened Nariman House in India's financial capital, Mumbai, provides a reality check on the events that took place there nearly six years ago.

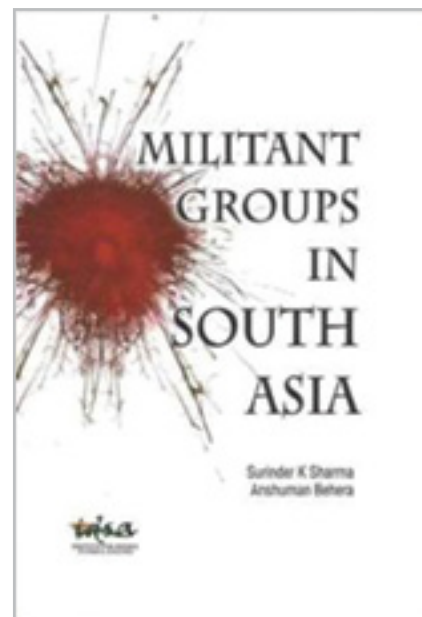
Nariman House was the headquarters of the Jewish organization Chabad of Mumbai. The November 2008 assault on the six-storey building in a narrow South Mumbai lane left six people dead, including the center's directors, Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg and his pregnant wife Rivika. The couple had come to Mumbai in 2003 to serve the local Jewish community and through their dedication made the center one of the city's landmarks. When the Nariman House opened its doors once again on 26 August 2014, Rabbi Moshe Kotlarsky, vice chairman of Merkos L'nyonei Chinuch, the Jewish group's education arm that helped rebuild the house, said, "We will not fight terror with AK 47s, nor with grenades. We will fight by spreading love. I had pledged rebuilding. It's a moment of tears as well as a moment of joy. We will continue their (the late couple's) legacy."<sup>1</sup>

The bullet holes left in the walls where the Holtzbergs died serve as reminders of the tragedy that shook Nariman House and six other Mumbai landmarks, including the iconic Taj Hotel, the Chhatrapati Shivaji Railway Terminus, and the popular Leopold café, for nearly 59 hours from 26 to 29 November 2008. The perpetrators were 10 youth apparently connected to the Pakistani organization, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). Enterprising TV journalists brought the horrendous mayhem they created "live" to every sitting room across the world. The assault left 166 people dead, 28 of whom were citizens of the United States, Britain, and nine other countries. Only one gunman, Ajmal Kasab, was caught alive. But the real masterminds remain free in Pakistan because the police case registered against them under pressure from India and the United States has made no headway thus far. On the grounds that Ajmal Kasab was a non-state actor, Pakistan barely acknowledged the official notice of his death and refused to accept his body.<sup>2</sup>

A new book throws fresh light on the Pakistani organization, LeT, to which Kasab belonged and which allegedly prepared him and his cohort for the assault on Mumbai. *Militant Groups in South Asia* devotes 12 pages to LeT, which also styles itself as "Soldiers of the Pure." The authors are Surinder Kumar Sharma, who is an authority on the phenomenon of Islamic militancy in Pakistan and Kashmir with all its ramifications, and Anshuman Behera, a specialist in India's internal security who pays particular attention to religious fundamentalism and terrorism. Both are associated with the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), a New Delhi-based think tank.

*Reviewed by Malladi Rama Rao,  
Editor, South Asian Tribune*

Surinder K. Sharma and  
Anshuman Behera  
New Delhi: Pentagon Press,  
Institute for Defence Studies and  
Analyses (IDSA)  
Hardcover: Indian Rupees 995/-  
302 pages



The bullet holes left in the walls where the Holtzbergs died serve as reminders of the tragedy that shook Nariman House and six other Mumbai landmarks.



In their introduction to the section on LeT, the authors note,

The Mumbai carnage of 26 November 2008 and subsequent designation of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT—soldiers of the pure) as a terrorist organisation by the United Nations (UN) and the Pakistani government's promises to control the organisation have not affected the activities of the terrorist body at all. On the contrary, the activities of the organisation have been intensified and extensified, while the UN and the Pakistan government remain silent. Pakistan's former President, General Pervez Musharraf, banned LeT in January 2002, along with four other militant groups. Within a few months of its ban, it reportedly renamed itself Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD—party of the calling) (167).

For those who are keeping tabs on the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) phenomenon, the genesis, organizational structure, and footprint of LeT will be of interest, in addition to the way it changed its colors to survive the American ban. This is because, as Sharma and Behera make clear, LeT/JuD seeks to establish an Islamic state in South Asia by uniting all Muslim-majority regions in the countries that surround Pakistan: India, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Iran. LeT/JuD further pledges “the liberation of Kashmir and the destruction of India” (169).

Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, former professor of Islamiyat (Islamic religious studies) at the University of Engineering and Technology in Lahore, established the extremist group Markaz-ud Dawa-wal-Irshad (MDI) on a sprawling campus near Lahore in 1986. MDI initially focused on assisting the US-inspired anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan. After operating under the aegis of the Pakistan-based terrorist organization Al Barq for five years, Hafiz and his colleagues decided to form LeT “at the behest and with the support of Inter Services Intelligence (ISI)” (169). The authors contend that most of the Islamist and jihadi groups working in South Asia are the foot soldiers of ISI, which is the security wing of the Pakistan Army. From this hypothesis flows their thesis:

The pre-Al Qaeda and pre-Taliban groups, like LeT, were created by state agencies in Pakistan for specific objectives, that is, to launch a protracted proxy war in Kashmir and also to help the Americans in their efforts to drive out the

Soviet forces from Afghanistan through guerilla tactics. These groups largely depended on state patronage and funds generously provided by the US and other Western nations, and also West Asian countries like Saudi Arabia, through a network of newly created banking organisations like the Bank of Credit and Commerce International.<sup>3</sup> ... The jihadi groups in the Afghanistan-Pakistan (Af-Pak) region largely drew their cadres from madrassas and extremist religious groups in Pakistan which were amply supported by the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) directorate and the Pakistan Army. They relied primarily on the sentiments of religious “brotherhood,” both within Pakistan and outside, and their association with the ISI to create a chain of madrassas and training grounds for recruiting, indoctrinating and training the so-called “freedom fighters” (Mujahideen) (Introduction, 3–4).

How many jihadi groups are operating in South Asia? It is difficult to arrive at a precise number because these groups, like amoebas, keep splitting, merging, dividing, and reshaping themselves, often because of internal personality clashes. Another reason is the operational requirements of the ISI, which in turn executes the strategic goals identified by the Army's General Headquarters (GHQ) Shura of Corps Commanders. According to data culled from the South Asia Terrorism Portal, there are more than 200 militant groups in South Asia today, but not all of them are currently active.<sup>4</sup> Sharma and Behera have, therefore, chosen some 30 important groups for rigorous study, along with a few inactive groups identified on the basis of their potential to regroup and get back into action. A few smaller groups like Hizb-ul-Tahrir (HuT—Party of Liberation) are also mentioned because of their radical activities.

The book is divided into four parts.

*Part A* deals with two groups in Bangladesh: Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen (JuM) and Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami-Bangladesh (HuJI-B).

*Part B* focuses on 18 groups that are operating in India. Nine of them, including Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, are located in Kashmir; five groups operate in the predominantly tribal northeast of India; three Islamist groups, such as Al Ummah, have a pan-India footprint; and one left-wing



extremist outfit, the Communist Party of India (Maoist) (CPI-M), is active in eastern, central, and southern India.

*Part C* is exclusively about extremist groups in Pakistan. It brings into sharp focus the activities of more than a dozen groups, including the Pakistan Taliban, the Haqqani Network, LeT, and al Qaeda (AQ), which have been operating in Afghanistan and elsewhere beyond the porous Pakistani borders. Radical Sunni groups like Sipah-e-Sahaba of Pakistan (SSP) and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) receive notice because they have drawn into their fold a large number of the mujahedeen who became unemployed after the Soviet flag was pulled down in Kabul in 1989.

*Part D* is devoted exclusively to Hizb-ul-Tahrir, which is steadily emerging as a new threat with its call to Muslim Ummah to unite and reestablish some version of the medieval Caliphate that once ruled across the Mediterranean and Middle East. Founded in Jerusalem in 1953 by Sheikh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, a Palestinian radical, HuT, unlike ISIS, is not an armed group. There is evidence that HuT cadres have infiltrated the Pakistan armed forces. It has also entrenched itself in Central Asia, particularly in the valuable and contested Fergana Valley, which is shared by Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Today, HuT has a presence in 50 countries, including the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, the countries of the Middle East, and some Southeast Asian countries. In South Asia, it is active in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

In 2003, the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA), the publisher of the present book (in association with Pentagon Press), undertook a study on terrorist groups in Kashmir titled *Jihadis in Jammu and Kashmir: A Portrait Gallery*.<sup>5</sup> The present volume goes well beyond Kashmir; with data culled from open sources, it examines how terrorism has changed in the Indian subcontinent since 9/11. Sharma and Behera detail the cadre strength, recruitment and training methods, areas of operation and influence, alliances/networks, source of finances and weapons, and weapons in possession for each group, as well as its current status. Thus, their book serves as a kind of handbook on terrorist groups for the benefit of the initiated and uninitiated reader alike. In this short review, I can highlight only some of the more important groups and findings from this detailed work.

## The Afghanistan-Pakistan Factor

Any study of terrorism in South Asia must undertake a critical examination of the socio-political environment in Pakistan. Sharma and Behera do so within the context

of the groups in their study that are based primarily in Pakistan. The authors describe how many of these groups receive active or passive help from the agencies embedded within the Pakistani military and security establishment to carry out destabilizing activities in the region. This is “a suicidal strategy” according to the authors, but they believe it is perpetuated by Pakistan’s perceived grievances vis-à-vis India. “Unfortunately, despite the recognition at very top levels that the blow-back effect of nurturing non-state terror outfits has been disastrous for Pakistan, there has not been any significant revision of this policy of nurturing terror groups for use against India” (2).

The authors’ take on the group Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP, or Pakistan Taliban), and the Haqqani Network is also interesting.

The TTP has grown to be a serious threat to Pakistan as it has spread its network beyond FATA [Federally Administered Tribal Area]. Its presence in Punjab and in Karachi has been a cause of serious concern to the security forces. ... On 28 December 2012, the TTP offered to hold talks with the government but put a condition that it would not lay down its arms until the implementation of their version of Sharia in the country. ... [Pakistani Prime Minister] Nawaz Sharif, while talking to newly elected members of his party, said that “we should take the Taliban offer of talks seriously” (213).

On the Haqqani Network, which Washington sees as a major problem once US troops finish withdrawing from Afghanistan, the authors make the following observation:

In spite of the US declaring the group as a terrorist organisation and the group’s addition to the UN blacklist, there is no concrete proof that the Pakistan government has taken any action against the group. ...

It is unlikely that the sanctions will have a major effect on the militant activities of the outfit. This is because most of the funds collected are transferred through hawala (non-banking channels) or carried by human couriers. Further, the command of the network is now in the hands of Sirajuddin [Haqqani, son of the founder], who is believed to be one of the most strongly

committed Islamists, unlike his father, whom the US has not added to the list of terrorists. ...

Among the various sections of Taliban, the HN is known to be the most conservative and opposed to any idea of reconciliation. ... In case of any reconciliation, the Haqqanis are likely to stay out and push for a military takeover of Kabul depending on the ground situation and if it suits, Pakistan intelligence agencies may help them in their military adventure (165).<sup>6</sup>

After the 9/11 attacks, the Haqqani Network became more important than any other militant group to the development and sustainment of AQ and the global jihad.

There is a long write-up on the Indian Mujahideen (IM) in the chapter on Islamist groups in India with a pan-India footprint.<sup>7</sup> The IM has been held responsible for many terrorist strikes across India in cities like Jaipur, Ahmadabad, Pune, and Hyderabad since 2008. The United States has added the IM to the list of foreign terrorist organizations, as well as to the list of specially designated global terrorist entities.

Under the heading “Alliances and Network,” the authors write, “The arrest of Abu Jundal and Fasih Mohammad from Saudi Arabia has revealed the IM connection with the Pakistan-based terrorist group, LeT” (130). Notwithstanding an element of fatigue in the post-9/11 war against terror, the authors note that India is benefitting from increasing international cooperation in counterterrorism operations.

The book has a mandatory chapter on AQ, given that the group’s presence is strongly felt in South Asia. It has a foothold in some 100 other countries as well, either on its own or in league with a local group. AQ is the most organized, linked, and networked terrorist group in the world. Another important group that has close ties with AQ is LeT. “The LeT commander Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi’s association with the AQ is very special as he is the brother-in-law of Abu Abdur Rahman, one of the deputies of bin Laden. In the immediate post-9/11 period, after NATO forces attacked Afghanistan, it was gathered by the intelligence agencies that new recruits of AQ were trained in the LeT training camps” (153–54).

Sharma and Behera share the general perception that the killing of Osama bin Laden by US security forces in 2011 “weakened the strength of the AQ central to a

considerable extent” (156). Yet they hold the view that the allied AQ cells in various parts of the world have been getting stronger thanks to internet-based propaganda that has boosted operations, fundraising, and cadre intake from Western countries. The authors put the number of AQ-related websites at a whopping 5,600.

In the Indian sub-continent, the AQ is looking apparently weak. But it is not out of the scene. Militant outfits like the Haqqani Network, TTP, LeT and a few others are of major help to the AQ in sustaining its strength and position. As the US prepares to withdraw its security forces from Afghanistan in 2014, one should not be surprised to see the AQ becoming more active and strong in the years to come (156).

Because I began this review with the LeT attack on Mumbai, it is fair to revisit the chapter on Lashkar-e-Taiba. The LeT runs a number of training centers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan, and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). Its objective is to have an office and a center in every district of Pakistan. Three other LeT-related nuggets from Sharma and Behera’s book should be cause for alarm. First is LeT’s linkages with Chechen militants. Shamil Basayev, the Chechen rebel leader, was trained at LeT’s Khost (Afghanistan) camp in 1994; he later stayed at LeT’s Muridke campus. Second, LeT is actively involved in supporting the Muslim resistance in Bosnia, while raising funds and building sleeper cells in countries such as Spain and Germany. Third, LeT has recruited several persons from the United States and trained them at its camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan since 1989 (175–77).

“Unlike the Al Qaeda, which is solely dedicated to jihad, the LeT complements ‘armed struggle’ with education—*da’wah* and jihad—a combination which makes the LeT a ‘long distance runner’ in the field of jihad,” write Sharma and Behera (169). “The outfit has more than 3,000 offices across Pakistan and over two dozen launching camps for militants along the Line of Control (in Kashmir)” (171).

The authors offer insights into the genesis, history, ideology, agenda, and leadership of each group covered in this book, to “make the reader aware of the socio-political conditions as well as the ideological motivation that gave rise to the group” (9). Clinical precision in the details and an absence of patriotic blinkers are a big plus to the narrative. My main criticism is that some tight editing could have enhanced its readability. Furthermore, with their tight focus on Pakistan-based and India-centric groups, the authors pushed the extremist group Hizb-ul-Tahrir

literally to the last seven pages of the book. This radical party deserves closer examination because it is deadlier than ISIS and has declared Pakistan to be *wilayah*—a place suitable for the assumption of power. The authors may want to fill the gaps in their discussion of HuT in a subsequent edition of the book.

These minor criticisms aside, this book is an important contribution to the scholarship on regional terrorist groups, some of which have organic linkages with extremists in the Middle East, including ISIS. It should be very useful to counterterrorism experts and anyone who wishes to better understand the highly complex and increasingly volatile terrorist situation in South Asia. ❖

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Malladi Rama Rao** is a New Delhi-based analyst and writer, and the editor of the *South Asian Tribune*.

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## NOTES

- 1 “26/11 Terror Attacks: Jewish Chabad House Reopens after Six Years,” *Outlook*, 26 August 2014: <http://www.outlookindia.com/news/article/2611-Terror-Attacks-Jewish-Chabad-House-Reopens-After-Six-Years/857211>
- 2 Jayanth Jacob, “Stubborn Pak Refuses to Take Kasab’s Body,” *Hindustan Times*, 21 November 2012: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/stubborn-pak-refuses-to-take-kasab-s-body/article1-962456.aspx>; and “Ajmal Kasab Hanged, Buried at Pune’s Yerwada Jail,” NDTV, 21 November 2012: <http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/ajmal-kasab-hanged-buried-at-pune-s-yerwada-jail-295071>
- 3 The Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) was shut down in the mid-1990s after it was found to be engaged in international money-laundering on a grand scale.
- 4 The South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) collects data from across the region. Information on terrorist groups may be found on a per-country basis on the SATP website: <http://www.satp.org/>
- 5 K. Santhanam Sreedhar and Manish Sudhir Saxena, *Jihadis in Jammu and Kashmir: A Portrait Gallery* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 2003).
- 6 See also Lars W. Lilleby, “The Haqqani Network: Pursuing Feuds under the Guise of Jihad,” *CTX* 3, no. 4 (November 2013).
- 7 See also Bibhu Prasad Routray and Shanthie Mariet D’Souza, “The Indian Mujahideen: The New Face of Jihadist Consolidation,” *CTX* 4, no. 2 (May 2014).

## THE MOVING IMAGE

### The Potential of Transnational Cinema to Counter Islamic Extremism

*LTC Samuel W. Bettwy, US Army Reserve*

The so-called War on Terror is a “war of ideas” in which the Western world needs to “tell its story better.”

Egyptian and Algerian films are potentially more persuasive at reaching Muslim audiences because they offer more subtle depictions of Islamic extremists and terrorists.

IT IS WELL RECOGNIZED AMONG US STRATEGISTS AND POLICY MAKERS that the so-called War on Terror is a “war of ideas” in which the Western world needs to “tell its story better.”<sup>1</sup> Much has been written about the use of new social media such as Twitter to drive and shape political narratives,<sup>2</sup> but history shows the potential “soft” power of propaganda films as well. Today, it seems to be a foregone conclusion that in Western democracies, cinema is the sole province of commercial filmmakers who are driven not by politics but by profits and therefore the appetites of their audiences.<sup>3</sup> This article revisits literature on the propaganda value of cinema and suggests that the emergence of transnational filmmaking presents an opportunity for greater collaboration between US and Middle Eastern filmmakers to produce films designed to unify moderate Muslims against Islamic extremist messages<sup>4</sup> and perhaps even to dissuade some of those extremists from their incorrect interpretations of Islam.

Filmmakers, acting independently, tend to incorporate their own national biases into their work, as can be seen in many Western anti-terrorism films. Such films appeal to like-minded audiences, but very few are designed specifically to influence Muslim audiences. Western films instead tend to alienate these audiences by depicting the Islamic extremist as an irrational “other” to be dominated by Western heroes, conflating Muslims with Arabs and terrorists, and representing Israel as the victim of Palestinian terror.<sup>5</sup> But American filmmakers have an authentic story to tell that could resonate with the Muslim world—namely, the unique ability of US culture and society to assimilate immigrant Muslim populations.<sup>6</sup> Americans are also especially religious compared to other Western countries, but American filmmakers have been reluctant to address religion, and “the relationship between violence” and fundamentalist Islam.<sup>7</sup>

Egyptian and Algerian films are potentially more persuasive at reaching Muslim audiences because they offer more subtle depictions of Islamic extremists and terrorists as complex individuals who are misguided, and they tend to justify Palestinian violence against Israel (as do Palestinian films, naturally).<sup>8</sup> European filmmakers have begun collaborating with Middle Eastern filmmakers to produce films in response to Islamic fundamentalism, and the US government should consider encouraging US filmmakers to do the same.

This article describes the historical use of films as propaganda and their effectiveness and recommends that the United States consider promoting and even funding collaboration between US and Middle Eastern filmmakers to produce anti-terrorism films for consumption by foreign audiences. Documentaries are worth considering, but the most effective types of films appear to be narratives (feature films and television miniseries) in which ideas are more subtly, evenhandedly, and therefore persuasively delivered.

#### A Brief History of Cinematic Propaganda

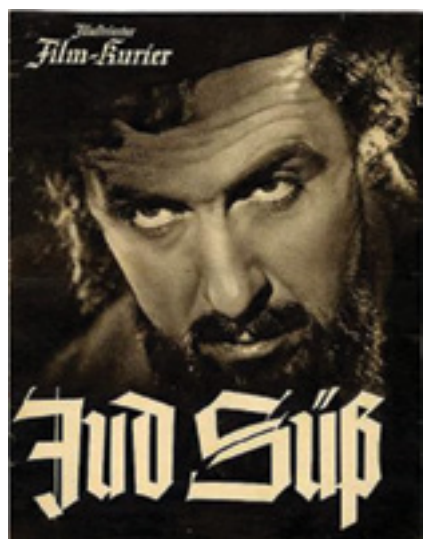
Literature on the history of propaganda films shows that the United States cannot rely on commercial US filmmakers acting independently to produce



narratives that will counter Islamic extremism. In a time of war, US filmmakers tend to produce patriotic films that unify Americans and their allies but alienate others. And in peacetime, they tend to depict US society as depraved, which plays into the hands of enemies. Collaboration among international filmmakers, especially European and Middle Eastern filmmakers, has resulted in a “transnational” narrative that is more balanced and genuine and therefore more palatable and even persuasive to a wide range of audiences worldwide.

Post–World War I commercial war films were, in effect, propaganda films that justified isolationism and, later, appeasement.

Feature films were first made as early as 1895, and their effectiveness as propaganda improved with the advent of sound in 1927.<sup>9</sup> Mustafa Özen describes the Ottoman Empire’s early use of films as propaganda during World War I.<sup>10</sup> Post–World War I commercial war films were, in effect, propaganda films that justified isolationism and, later, appeasement because they conveyed a message to the public that, apart from the heroism of the fighting man, the Great War was



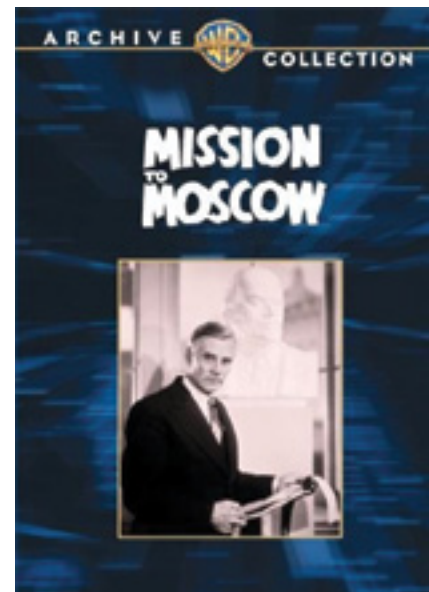
a “political catastrophe.”<sup>11</sup> Vladimir Lenin, Josef Stalin, and Leon Trotsky took control of the early Soviet cinema as propaganda “to implement a proletarian and atheist culture,”<sup>12</sup> and the 1925 Soviet silent film *Battleship Potemkin*<sup>13</sup> is cited as an effective propaganda film against the former Tsarist regime (and any lingering royalist sentiment among the population).<sup>14</sup> In 1933, the British Film Institute was founded to promote the use of film for propaganda purposes throughout the Empire,<sup>15</sup> including the Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment (1935–1937), in which British films were produced to acculturate Africans in East and Central Africa to capitalism and Western society.<sup>16</sup>

In 1935, Hitler commissioned the brilliant female director Leni Riefenstahl to glorify him and the Nazi regime in *Triumph of the Will*,<sup>17</sup> and five years later, his propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels commissioned the 1940 German anti-Semitic propaganda film *Jud Süß*.<sup>18</sup>

British propaganda films, transported by jeep and riverboat into remote areas, emphasized “the power and valour in combat of imperial military units.”

In response, England produced propaganda films that “successfully appealed to the interests of American audiences”<sup>19</sup> to draw the United States into the war against Germany “with depictions of the brutality of the Gestapo.”<sup>20</sup> A good example is the 1941 British film *Forty-Ninth Parallel*,<sup>21</sup> in which Laurence Olivier renders a cartoonish performance as a Quebecois who is murdered by invading Germans. The British also used propaganda films to gain the confidence and support of their West African colonialists. These films, transported by jeep and riverboat into remote areas, emphasized “the power and valour in combat of imperial military units, including the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy.”<sup>22</sup>

In 1942, the US Office of War Information (OWI) was established,<sup>23</sup> and the mission of its movie-review unit, the Bureau of Motion Pictures, was to influence the production of commercial films to promote the war effort to American audiences.<sup>24</sup> The Bureau also selected, acquired, and produced films for foreign



distribution to 85 countries.<sup>25</sup> It collaborated with foreign governments and private organizations to tailor films for specific countries, “suggesting ways in which a film could deliver stronger win-the-war messages.”<sup>26</sup> Some notable commercial products are the 1942 films *Blondie for Victory* and *Star Spangled Rhythm*,<sup>27</sup> which promoted volunteerism to support domestic war efforts; *Casablanca* (1942),<sup>28</sup> which portrayed the evils of the Germans in occupied French territories; and *Mission to Moscow* (1943),<sup>29</sup> which glorified US ally Stalin. In 1943, Congress discontinued funding OWI, and the movie-review unit was shut down.<sup>30</sup>

After World War II, the United States Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948 established a bureaucracy (the USIE) for the management of exchange programs in arts, education, and culture.<sup>31</sup> Despite the proven success of feature films, the USIE produced and commissioned only documentary films,

and by 1951, it claimed over 400 million viewers per year. The films highlighted Americans' high standard of living and the United States' leadership in science, technology, and industry. The purpose was "to convince foreigners of their 'own potentialities as individuals and nations.'" <sup>32</sup> Mobile projection units were dispatched to remote locations, especially in South America and Africa, <sup>33</sup> where the documentaries were very well received, primarily because of the novelty of cinema in rural areas.

Due to the perceived propaganda value of documentaries, the United States continued their production during the entirety of the Cold War. <sup>34</sup> In 1952, President Harry Truman consolidated all of the government's overseas film activities within the International Information Administration (IIA), <sup>35</sup> and in 1953, under President Dwight Eisenhower, the responsibilities of the IIA were transferred to the secretary of state under the newly created US Information Agency (USIA). <sup>36</sup> The USIA oversaw radio stations like Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

In 1956, the USIA introduced documentaries designed to fight the Cold War by telling "the world about peace and the dignity of the individual." <sup>37</sup> Domestic distribution of the films was initially prohibited because this "US Government agency should not be able to brainwash Americans or put things out there that would not be considered objective information." <sup>38</sup> (Apparently there was no such quibble regarding foreign audiences.)

During the John Kennedy presidency, the USIA's film program flourished under Hollywood producer George Stevens, Jr., who commissioned documentary films designed to reinforce the "ideological agenda and foreign policy purpose of the United States." <sup>39</sup> The USIA favored short-form documentaries and produced thousands of them because they "present a point of view quickly and dramatically." <sup>40</sup> But "short subjects" were falling out of fashion, no longer shown before the main feature in movie theaters, and the USIA lost influence over the production of commercial films. <sup>41</sup>

Because of the United States' preoccupation with the Cold War, counterterrorism did not become a high priority until the 1990s. <sup>42</sup> In 1993, "USIA Director [Joseph] Duffey called for the country to engage the world on issues of 'the economy, the environment, drugs and terrorism.'" <sup>43</sup> But the perceived nature and threat of terrorism was not enough to cause a resurgence of public diplomacy, and the USIA was dismantled in 1999. <sup>44</sup> Public diplomacy did not end with the demise of the USIA, but efforts were less centralized, and the governmental production of documentary films ended.

The 9/11 attacks inspired a fresh round of commercial anti-terrorism, pro-Western films. As Motion Picture Association of America president Jack Valenti stated, "We are not limited to domestic measures. The American entertainment industry has a unique capacity to reach audiences worldwide with important messages." <sup>45</sup> At the outset of the US military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, "the film divisions of the major media conglomerates expressed their eagerness to become part of the war effort." <sup>46</sup>

With a propaganda strategy "aimed at terrorists rather than Islam in general," <sup>47</sup> President George W. Bush established the Office of Global Communications, <sup>48</sup>

Domestic distribution of the films was initially prohibited because the "US Government agency should not be able to brainwash Americans."

The 9/11 attacks inspired a fresh round of commercial anti-terrorism, pro-Western films.



The American Film Showcase coordinates with US embassies to sponsor workshops with emerging filmmakers, youth groups, and leaders of nongovernmental organizations.

which focused on radio and television programming.<sup>49</sup> The Office promoted television programs that focused on Muslim life in the United States, but many TV stations in Islamic countries refused to air the programs.<sup>50</sup> VOA was expanded to broadcast radio programs in Afghanistan, while countermeasures were taken against the Taliban that included the bombing of its radio station Radio Shariah.<sup>51</sup>

Currently, the secretary of state and the Broadcasting Board of Governors remain authorized to use appropriated funds “for public diplomacy information programs ... intended for foreign audiences ... through press, publications, radio, motion pictures, the Internet, and other information media, including social media.”<sup>52</sup> The State Department exercises this authority regarding motion pictures through its American Film Showcase, which coordinates with US embassies to sponsor workshops with emerging filmmakers, youth groups, and leaders of nongovernmental organizations to address local issues through cultural exchanges.<sup>53</sup>

## Effectiveness of Cinema as Propaganda

There are no useful data on the effectiveness of cinema as propaganda. The USIA’s primary performance measure was the size of its audiences, which is a measure of success used by commercial film producers.<sup>54</sup> But Hollywood is trying only to strike an emotional chord with audiences; it is not often trying to change their hearts and minds. The USIA may have dazzled millions of unsophisticated foreign viewers with the new technology of filmmaking, but there is no evidence documenting what effect, if any, the substance of the films had on their points of view.

“Hollywood was the chief source of images of America for foreigners. This turned out to be the best propaganda the government could wish for.”

Subjective, qualitative assessments are available, but they may be biased with over-optimism or wishful thinking. For example, British information officers judged their World War II propaganda films to be effective in “mobilizing people to the war effort;”<sup>55</sup> Congress expressed its approval of USIA documentaries by continuing to fund them;<sup>56</sup> Jackie Kennedy wrote to pioneer television journalist Edward R. Murrow, “You made the world look at us in a new way;”<sup>57</sup> and the April 1966 issue of *Newsweek* hailed the “soft policy” films of the USIA.<sup>58</sup> But there are no studies, performance data, or other concrete criteria to back up these opinions.

James Combs and Sara Combs contend that, despite the high quality of USIA’s documentaries, “Hollywood was the chief source of images of America for foreigners. This turned out to be the best propaganda the government could wish for—messages that flaunted American affluence, freedom, and vitality.”<sup>59</sup> They cite as examples of effective propaganda feature films *That Hamilton Woman*<sup>60</sup> and *Mrs. Miniver*. *Mrs. Miniver* “promoted positive representations of British people and the national struggle against Fascism.”<sup>61</sup> Prime Minister Winston Churchill reportedly said the film helped the war effort “more than a whole flotilla of destroyers could.”<sup>62</sup> President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered “propaganda leaflets with the vicar’s stirring sermon dropped over cities in Occupied Europe.”<sup>63</sup> Wilson P. Dizard, a retired Foreign Service officer, wrote that “arguably movies were the most potent mass media instrument developed in the twentieth century—and the United States led the world in exploiting it through Hollywood films.”<sup>64</sup>

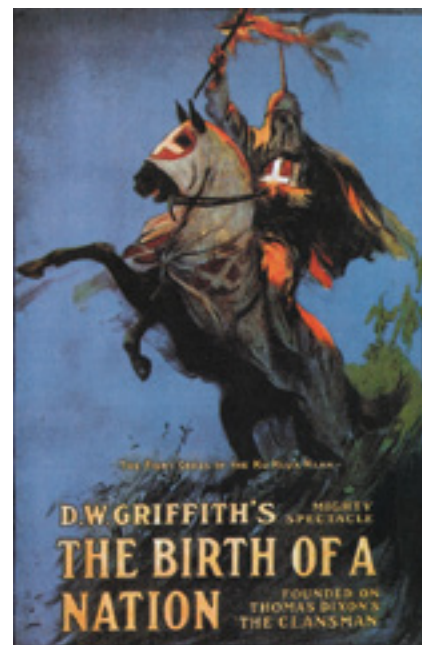


In his extensive survey of propaganda films of the Soviet Union (1917–1928), Germany (1933–1945), and England (1938–1945), film historian Nicholas Reeves argues that documentaries are not effective at shaping public opinion<sup>65</sup> but acknowledges the possible propaganda value of feature films. He states, “There can be little doubt that, in contrast to all the other examples of [documentary] film propaganda that we have discussed, [feature] films produced in Britain during the Second World War did achieve much success.”<sup>66</sup> Feature films can have propaganda value, but the conditions have to be just right. Done incorrectly, they can be ineffective or, worse, counterproductive.

Because they are effective at solidifying or shaping public opinion, feature films can stir up hatred. D.W. Griffith’s 1915 feature film *Birth of a Nation*<sup>67</sup> is cited as an embarrassing example of a film that was effective in carrying “a virulent message of racism, leading to a revival of the KKK [Ku Klux Klan—a militant white supremacist group that arose following the US Civil War] in the 1920s.”<sup>68</sup> Totalitarian regimes have also recognized the propaganda value of feature films to stir up both ultra-patriotism and hatred of others, which is a plot point in the 2009 Quentin Tarantino anti-Nazi film *Inglourious Basterds*.<sup>69</sup> *Jud Süß*<sup>70</sup> has been cited as “one of the most notorious and successful pieces of antisemitic film propaganda produced in Nazi Germany.”<sup>71</sup>

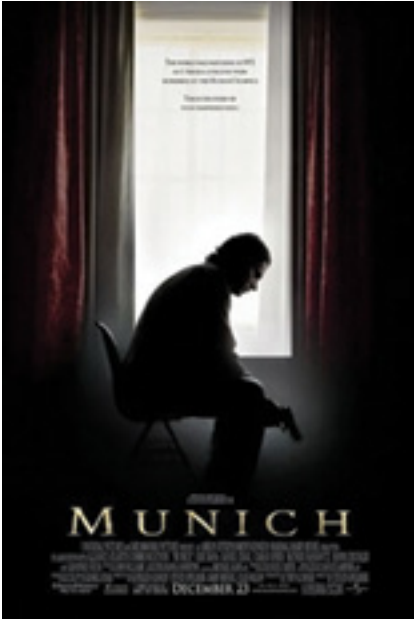
Many modern commercial US films are likely counterproductive as propaganda in foreign countries because they focus on the negative aspects of American society. Self-criticism can be an effective tool of persuasion for foreign audiences, but the airing of “dirty laundry” is easily misunderstood and can be used by foreign governments as an informational weapon against the United States. During the 1960s, some in Congress questioned the wisdom of airing our civil rights problems on film.<sup>72</sup> At the 1970 Sorrento Film Festival in Italy, President Richard Nixon’s USIA director Frank Shakespeare lamented the vision of America in Hollywood films, where “most of the [Hollywood] films deal with social aberration in American society and tend to create the illusion ... that we are a purposeless society dedicated to violence and vice.”<sup>73</sup> As Bernard Rubin wrote in 1971, “Motion pictures, shown around the world in theaters or on television, are often condemned for introducing noxious social ideas and, by repetition of these themes, forming bases for hatred between men and nations.”<sup>74</sup> In 1993, President Bill Clinton’s USIA director Joseph Duffey bemoaned the fact that commercial media represented the United States as a “culture of instant gratification.”<sup>75</sup> The State Department therefore mistrusts directors like Quentin Tarantino and favors directors like Steven Spielberg.<sup>76</sup> According to media scholar Yosefa Loshitzky, Spielberg’s *Munich*<sup>77</sup> was “Hollywood’s ultimate Zionist apology, perpetuat[ing] the myth of Israel’s unchallenged moral superiority.”<sup>78</sup>

All of these assessments about the propaganda value of films concern the solidifying or shaping of latent public opinion. But films may also have the potential to persuade or dissuade. Josef Stalin is quoted as telling a visitor from the United States, “If I could control the medium of American motion pictures, I would need nothing else to convert the entire world to Communism.”<sup>79</sup> As discussed in the following section, Egyptian and Algerian filmmakers have been producing films since the early 1990s to criticize Islamic fundamentalists and educate Middle Eastern audiences on the true, nonviolent precepts of Islam. Many such films are also critical of globalization and the West, but they denounce violence as a viable solution. Egyptian and Algerian filmmakers have also collaborated



with European filmmakers to produce even more persuasive, cross-cultural films, which are known in film studies as “transnational” films.

## Transnational Anti-terrorism Cinema



As Combs and Combs point out, propaganda is less effective when it is easily recognized as propaganda. “When propaganda is obvious, it can be ignored as audiences suffer through it awaiting the next battle scene.”<sup>80</sup> The most effective propaganda is “oblique and covert, interwoven in the fabric of a movie in a somewhat obscure fashion but apparent enough to have an impact without encountering ... resistance” from the audience.<sup>81</sup> As Peter Peterson of the Council on Foreign Relations writes, “The credibility of an American message will be enhanced significantly when it does not appear unilateral.”<sup>82</sup> For this reason, documentaries are probably the least effective form of propaganda, just as Reeves concluded. Documentaries are generally viewed and accepted by those who are already sympathetic and resisted by viewers, if any, who hold opposing views.<sup>83</sup>

There is also the problem of communicating to a foreign audience.<sup>84</sup> As an article in the October 2010 issue of *Entertainment Diplomacy* stated, “Film can be a tricky medium for an outsider to manipulate,”<sup>85</sup> and there is a natural mistrust of a governmental role in communications.<sup>86</sup> A transnational film, however, can be so internationally collaborative that it becomes difficult to determine its national origin.<sup>87</sup> The degree to which a film is transnational can be assessed according to the following attributes: realism, stories based on real-life events, intercultural dialogue, multiple native-spoken languages, international settings and filming locations, diasporic and exilic themes, narratives about globalization, international stars, and most importantly, international collaboration between or among filmmakers.<sup>88</sup>



Carlo Testa, a professor of comparative literature, examined several Italian films on left-wing terrorism from 1971 through 2002 and determined that the most persuasive condemnations of terrorism were found in films with universal, as opposed to parochial, themes.<sup>89</sup> Cinematic exchange results in a hybridization of ideas and approaches, so transnational films tend to carry universal themes that will be more likely to reach and resonate with foreign audiences.

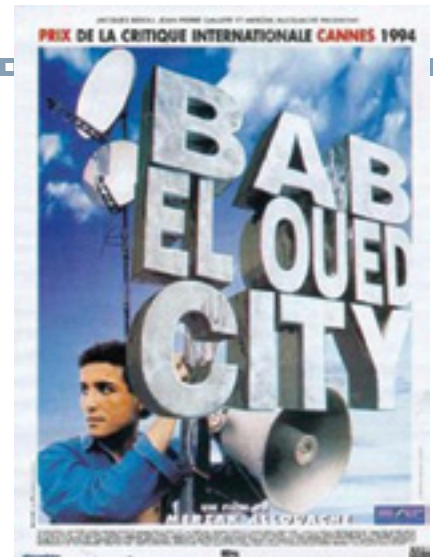
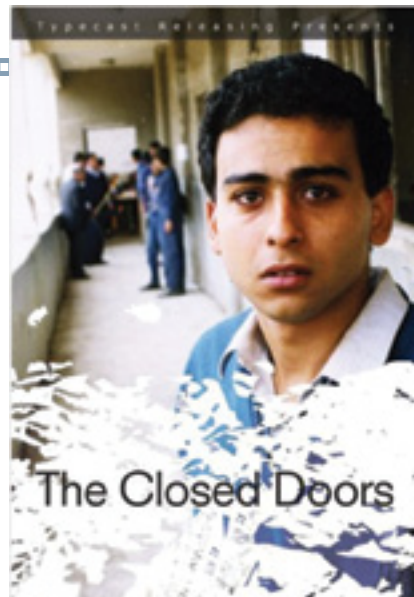
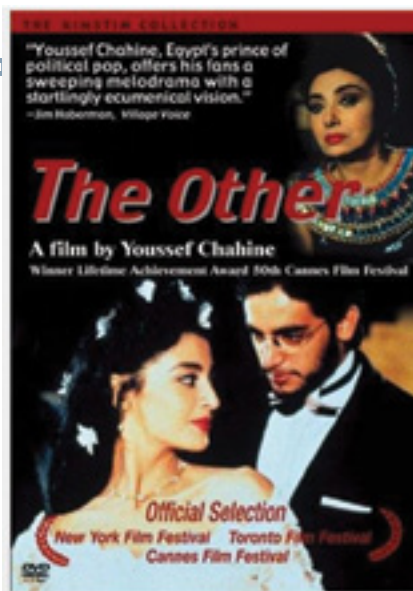
Since the mid-1990s, Egyptian and Algerian cinema has challenged Islamic fundamentalism, which is viewed by Cairo as a threat to Egyptians’ way of life.<sup>90</sup> In 1994, Egyptian filmmaker Nader Galal made *The Terrorist*, which is said to be the first Egyptian film to denounce Islamic terrorism.<sup>91</sup> The story is about an Islamic extremist who evades law enforcement by living with a modern Muslim family. After seeing how they live, he has doubts about his extreme views of Islam. The Egyptian Minister of Information praised the film for revealing “the internal contradictions within the terrorist movement” and for showing that “whenever anyone is allowed to see society clearly, they give up extremism.”<sup>92</sup>

Many Middle Eastern anti-terrorism films also criticize globalization (closely associated with the West), which is perceived to be an underlying cause of terrorism. In his contribution to the collaborative film *September 11*, Egyptian director Youssef Chahine criticizes both Islamic fundamentalists and the United States, arguing that the United States is responsible for the 9/11 attacks because it created the monster that attacked it.<sup>93</sup> “Americans decide who the terrorist is,” says Chahine (played by Nour El-Sharif) in his film.<sup>94</sup> In the French-Egyptian

collaboration *The Other* (1999),<sup>95</sup> Chahine depicts poor and middle-class Egyptians as victims of both globalization and Islamic terrorism through star-crossed lovers Adam and Hanane, who are a modern-day Egyptian Romeo and Juliet.

The US government may be reluctant to promote the production of films that criticize the United States, but as security studies expert Michael Mazarr suggests, to be effective, anti-terrorism films should “serve up strong critiques of US culture and policies, so long as the proposed remedies are nonviolent.”<sup>96</sup> And strategist Amy Zalman writes that “the United States will be well served ... by learning to see itself as others see it in action ... in shaping its end of a global dialogue.”<sup>97</sup>

There are also several examples of collaboration between European and Middle Eastern filmmakers to produce transnational films that express a distrust of



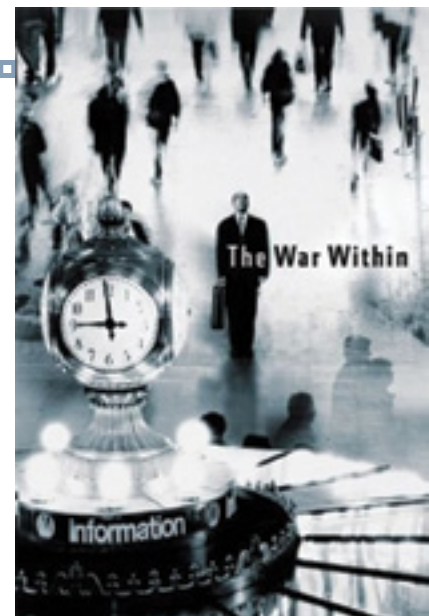
Islamic fundamentalism, the West, and globalization. In *Bab El-Oued City* (1994),<sup>98</sup> which is a French-German-Swiss-Algerian collaboration, Algerian filmmaker Merzak Allouache follows the conflict between a young Algerian man and local Islamic fundamentalists, hinting that the fundamentalists are supported by corrupt government officials.<sup>99</sup> Before he is driven out, the local imam tells the fundamentalists, “Violence begets violence. Islam is a religion of tolerance, against violence.” At the same time that this film criticizes Islamic fundamentalism, it associates Western influences with decadence and downfall.

*Closed Doors* (1999),<sup>100</sup> the result of French-Egyptian collaboration, is “oriented to audiences and contexts of production outside the Middle East.”<sup>101</sup> Egyptian filmmaker Atef Hetata depicts how Mohammad, a young, sexually repressed male growing up in a poor section of Cairo, is singled out and recruited to study at a local madrassa that espouses the creation of an Islamic nation. In the French-Algerian collaboration *Rachida* (2002),<sup>102</sup> a female schoolteacher in Algiers defies terrorists who attempt to murder her for refusing to plant a bomb at the school where she teaches.



The Academy Award–nominated Dutch-Palestinian-Israeli-German-French collaboration *Paradise Now* (2005) is a strongly transnational film. Dutch-Palestinian director Hany Abu-Assad presents a balanced narrative about two Palestinian friends who are recruited to conduct a suicide bombing mission in Tel Aviv. The Arabic language film is shot on location in Nablus and Tel Aviv. After much soul-searching, one of the would-be suicide bombers backs out, and the other decides to go forward with it. Palestinians in the West Bank criticized the film for portraying the suicide bombers as “less than heroic and godless, hesitant in their missions,”<sup>103</sup> while Israelis criticized the film because it would “encourage more terrorist attacks all over the world.”<sup>104</sup>

A rare example of a US film that addresses Islamic extremism is the 2005 diasporic narrative *The War Within*,<sup>105</sup> in which screenwriter Ayad Akhtar, an



American of Pakistani descent, employs extensive intercultural dialogue about Islamic faith in a story about Pakistani Hassan and his unwavering, successful plan to detonate a suicide bomb in New York City’s Grand Central Station. Hassan was radicalized by his prison cell mate after American agents kidnap him from the streets of London and hand him over to Pakistani agents, who torture him for two years. After his release, Hassan goes to the United States to carry out a suicide bomb attack. The film is daring for a US film because it addresses the clash between moderate and radical Muslims and educates the viewer about the difference between greater jihad (the struggle within) and lesser jihad (the use of violence).

## Conclusion and Recommendation

There is reason to believe that films, when properly made, can be a powerful propaganda tool to solidify the unity of moderate Muslims in the Middle East and perhaps even to help disabuse Islamic extremists of their misperceptions that Islam justifies the use of violence. The most effective vehicles for conveying this message in films to target audiences are probably feature films and television



miniseries.<sup>106</sup> Whereas “most European states have been very reluctant to ... directly challenge the extremist ideology,”<sup>107</sup> the United States has the moral authority to do so. During the Cold War, the USIA challenged communism by producing films that vaunted American values and achievements. The US government should consider the promotion of films that challenge Islamic extremism by emphasizing America’s strong religious heritage, its open pluralistic society, and its successful assimilation of Muslims. The government should also consider the promotion of collaborative film projects between US and Middle Eastern filmmakers. Such collaboration is likely to result in a persuasive cross-cultural product that will help to unify moderate Muslims and counter the violent propaganda of Islamic extremists.

Collaboration is likely to result in a persuasive cross-cultural product that will help to unify moderate Muslims and counter the violent propaganda of Islamic extremists.

Performance data and measures should also be developed to determine the effectiveness of films in changing the knowledge, opinions, and attitudes of foreign audiences. Shortly before its demise in 1999, the USIA set forth some “examples of data sources” in its *USIA 1997–2002 Strategic Plan* “to determine whether progress is being made in achieving [its] performance objectives.”<sup>108</sup> One data source that related directly to films was the “results of foreign audience research.” Today, 17 years later, obtaining these data is much easier given the dramatic expansion of the internet, with broader access to films and the ability of audience members and critics to write online reviews, such as those found on Rottentomatoes.com and numerous blogs. Such instant feedback can help US strategists analyze and assess the effect that anti-terrorism films are having on audiences. ♦

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## NOTES

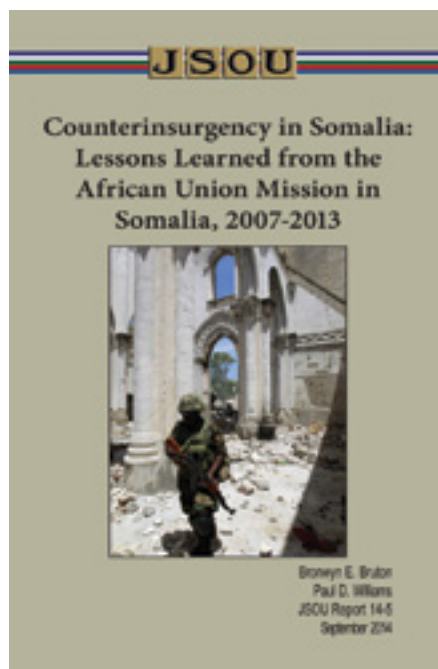
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- 108 *USIA Strategic Plan 1997–2002*.

## JSOU PUBLICATIONS

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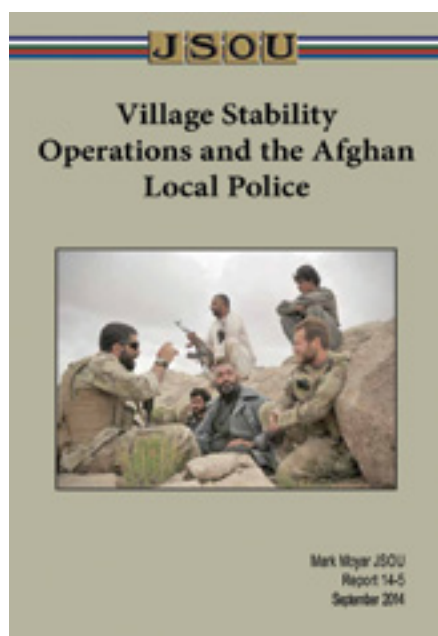


### Counterinsurgency in Somalia: Lessons Learned from the African Union Mission in Somalia, 2007–2013

by Bronwyn E. Bruton and Paul D. Williams

Issue Date: September 2014

Bronwyn Bruton and Paul Williams bring their expertise in governance, conflict mitigation, and African affairs to this analysis of Somalia's attempts to establish security and build state institutions while facing the Harakat al-Shabaab insurgency. By every measure of state effectiveness—income generation and distribution, execution of the rule of law, and ability to provide basic human security—Somalia has little or no capability. The authors address the roots of Somalia's long-running conflict and examine the often conflicting motivations of the large range of actors—local, national, regional, and international. This context is essential for understanding the evolution and persistence of Harakat al-Shabaab. With its links to al Qaeda, Harakat al-Shabaab remains a security challenge for the entire Horn of Africa. While the Africa Union Mission in Somalia's (AMISOM) goal was to protect Somalia's weak transitional national government and stabilize the security environment, its mission went well beyond traditional peacekeeping to include warfighting, counterinsurgency operations, and humanitarian assistance. The AMISOM approach may come to characterize future operations in this region.



### Village Stability Operations and the Afghan Local Police

by Mark Moyer

Issue Date: September 2014

In this monograph, Dr. Moyer outlines the history of the Village Stability Operations (VSO) program and its Afghan partner program, the Afghan Local Police (ALP). These programs are critical, first of all, because they epitomize the "indirect approach" to special operations. They also are crucial for Special Operations Forces (SOF), particularly United States Special Operations Forces, because of their sheer magnitude. From 2010 to 2013, the US government dedicated a large fraction of total USSOF strength to VSO in Afghanistan. Based on extensive research within Afghanistan, Dr. Moyer covers VSO and ALP from their inception through the end of VSO and the transition of the ALP to complete Afghan control. In addition, Dr. Moyer describes the challenges encountered in transitioning the ALP to Afghan control and their implications for the transition of future SOF programs. Dr. Moyer concludes that VSO and ALP demonstrated the ability of SOF to advance US interests through participation in community mobilization, counterinsurgency, and capacity building.



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